NEW DESIGNS FOR 2019

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ILLUSTRATED

Pots of Style

40 beautiful planting ideas for containers

From spring's delicate early risers to the intense hues of late summer

SPECIAL EDITION

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WELCOME

This special edition of *Gardens Illustrated* is full of inspiring ideas for beautiful containers that celebrate the seasons. From spring's delicate early risers to the intense hues of late summer, it includes plants and planting combinations for gardens of every size and style.

The containers have all been created by expert head gardeners and plantspeople, including Troy Scott Smith, Hannah Gardner and Matthew Reese, and each idea includes plenty of practical growing tips.

From table-top collections of alpines to meadow-inspired troughs, a good combination relies on a good host. With this in mind, also included is a useful guide to the most stylish containers available, as well as advice on the best new planting kit.

I hope you enjoy this *Gardens Illustrated* special issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR,
GARDENS ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

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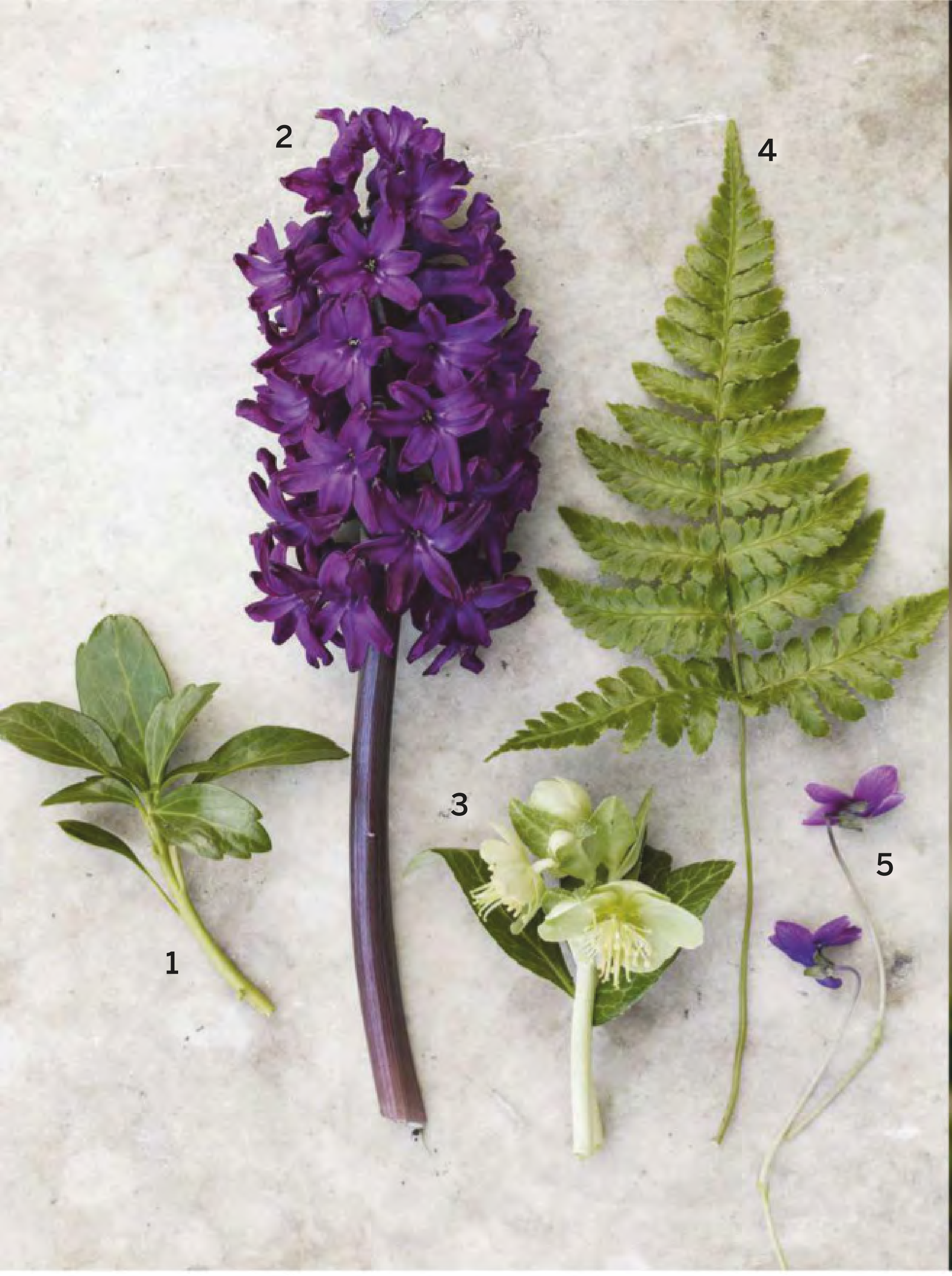
EARLY SPRING

Mark new beginnings and the start of the gardening year with textural green displays and groupings of pots that celebrate spring's delicate early risers. Plant up these gorgeous designs close to the house – around the front door or arrange on an outside table – to enjoy their colour and charm at close quarters.



A HIT FOR THE SENSES

WORDS JACKY MILLS

In late winter, it's therapeutic to indulge in a hit of colour and scent when our senses are at their most deprived. The brilliant purple spikes of *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Woodstock', with their powerful fragrance, matched with the intensity of the purplish-pink flowers of *Viola* 'Kim', provide both. I've used a combination of plants so when these flowers fade, the rest becomes a study in form and texture. The overall effect, placed on a table so you can appreciate the scent, really brightens up a partially shady corner.

How to achieve the look

This sweet violet is just one of many cultivars available today. Its delicate, little flowers with darker buds are held beautifully above the rounded, spring-green leaves. These contrast with the pewter, veined leaves of *Helleborus lividus* 'White Marble'. The creamy, acid-green flowers that appear from late winter increase the vibrancy of the hyacinth and violet. The Japanese spurge, *Pachysandra terminalis,* with its smooth, glossy-green leaves, lends another texture and base colour to the planting and produces clusters of white flowers in late spring. I added some *Dryopteris erythrosora* var. *prolifica,* the lacy, clump-forming autumn fern, towards the back of the planting. Its delicate fronds emerge as the other flowers fade. I bought this old, French, galvanised tub from a junk shop and drilled holes into the base for drainage. A layer of crocks (pieces of broken pot) and gravel prevent these holes clogging up and a mix of John Innes No.2 compost with extra grit, improves drainage further. When the plants outgrow the container, they can be planted out into shady areas of the garden, the rhizomatous sweet violet and spurge making great evergreen groundcover. The ferns thrive in moisture-retentive soil, so incorporate plenty of leaf mould.

Plants

1 *Pachysandra terminalis*
Evergreen perennial with glossy, leaves and erect spikes of small flowers in spring. May – June. 20-30cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b†.

2 *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Woodstock'
Hardy bulb that can be potted up early and brought indoors to flower in January. March – April. 5cm. RHS H4, USDA 3a-7b.

3 *Helleborus lividus* 'White Marble'
This beautiful Majorcan species is tender, but can be enjoyed outside in a container you can move inside. February – May. 30cm. USDA 8a-9b.

4 *Dryopteris erythrosora* var. *prolifica*
This prolific copper shield fern is evergreen in mild winters. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9a.

5 *Viola* 'Kim'
Sweet violet with distinctive, sweetly scented, purple flowers. March – April. 10-30cm. USDA 4a-9b.

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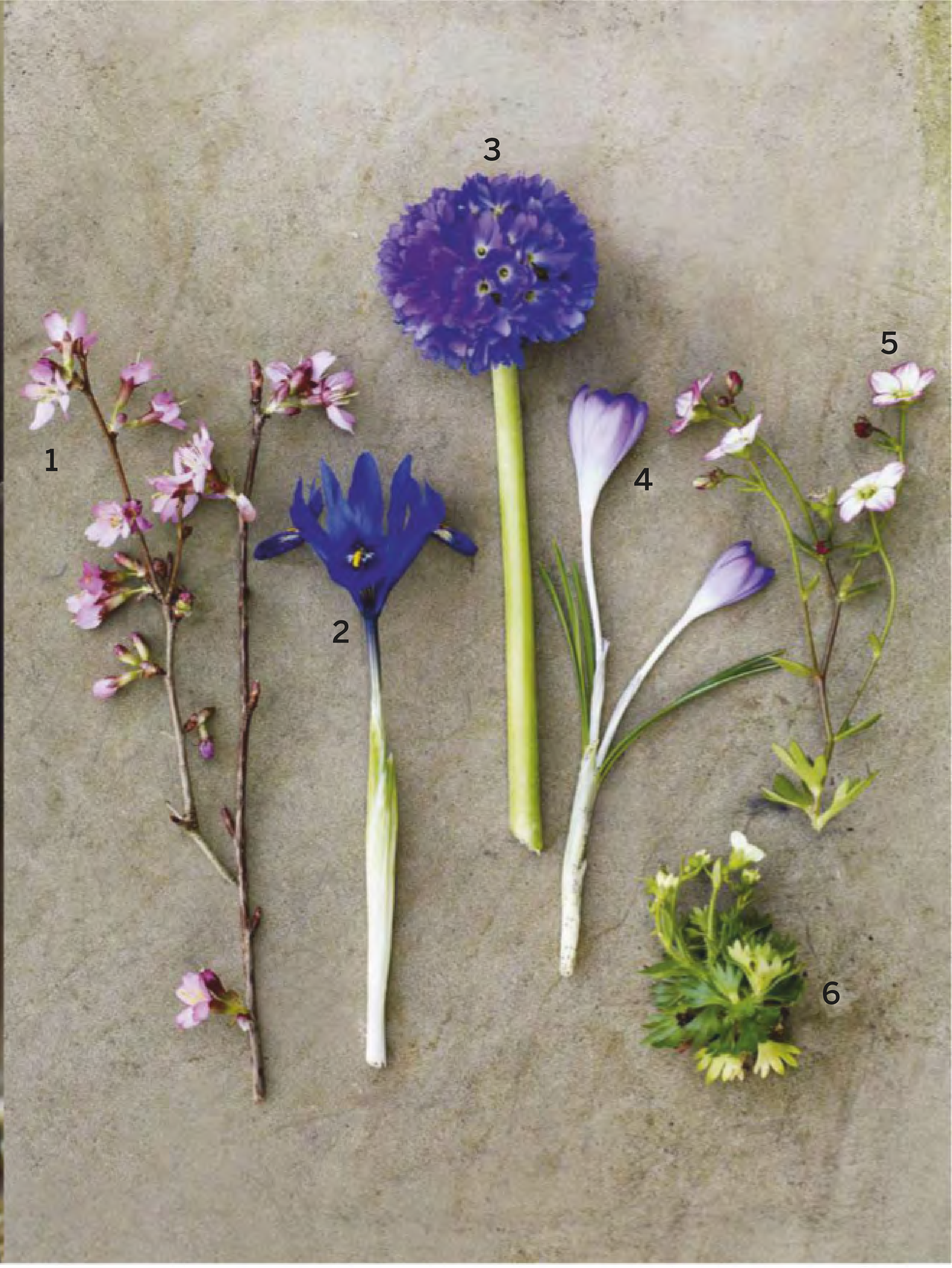
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



POTTED GEMS

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

With so many plants bursting into flower, I like to grow a range in pots and arrange them on a metal table in the yard to remind me of what I have and how beautiful the flowers are close up. It also reminds me of my training at Kew, where myriad alpines are grown in pots to perfection and displayed in the Alpine House. Sometimes I grow them in plastic pots and transfer them into terracotta ones for the display.

How to achieve the look

Prunus 'Okamé', a cross between *P. incisa* and *P. campanulata*, is the centre plant in this display and sets the colour with its carmine-pink flowers. *Iris reticulata* 'Harmony' is easy to grow in pots, where you can appreciate its faint scent. I always grow a few *Crocus tommasinianus* in pots every year, not just for the name, but also for its perfect flowers. *Primula denticulata* 'Corolla Blue', the drumstick primula, looks great in a pot, but also makes a big impression in the garden. For a softer texture, I have added two *Saxifraga* x *arendsii*, namely 'Alpino Early Pink' and 'Touran Lime Green'. Both work really well in pots and flower for a long time. Lastly, there is a pot of two forms of *Cyclamen coum*, to add more structure and colour.

Old terracotta pots are not only great for growing plants in but look fabulous too. Using some gravel to cover the soil also helps to link the plants visually, and I use a local gravel, so it ties in with the walls in the background. I always make sure the drainage is good and mix the soil individually for each plant, although most grow well in an equal mixture of John Innes No.2 and multi-purpose compost with extra grit for drainage. Plants grown in pots benefit from liquid food added to the watering can, especially if they stay in the pot for a long time.

Plants

1 *Prunus* 'Okamé'
Will grow for a few seasons in a pot, but it is better in the garden, where it will develop into a small tree. March – April. 3-5m. AGM. USDA 6a-8b.

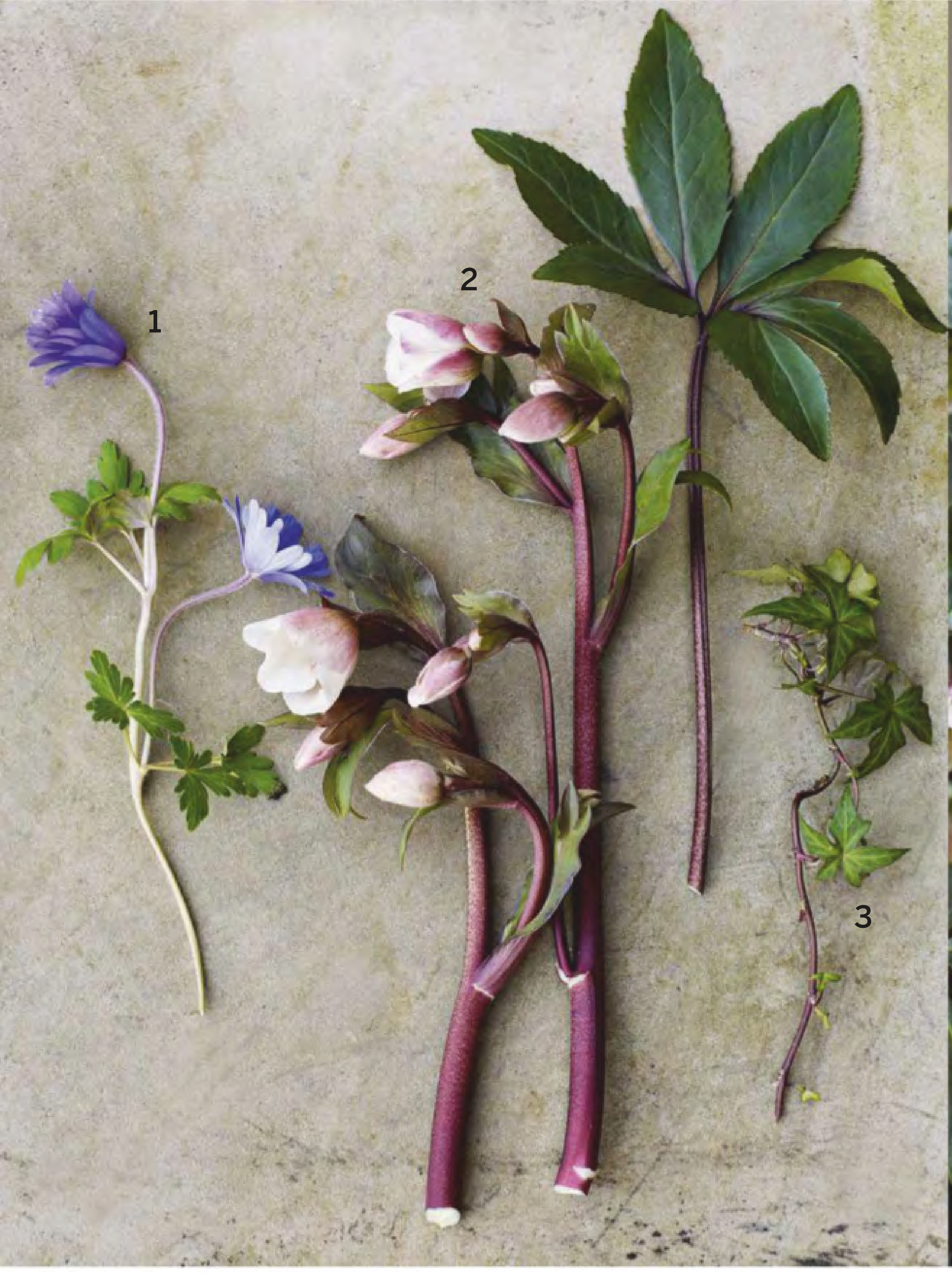
2 *Iris reticulata* 'Harmony'
After use can be planted out in well-drained soil. February – March. 10-15cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

3 *Primula denticulata* 'Corolla Blue'
One of the easier primulas to grow. Keep moist at all times. March – April. 20-30cm. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Crocus tommasinianus*
Great to naturalise in grass and even self-seeds. February – March. 10cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Saxifraga* x *arendsii* 'Alpino Early Pink' and
6 *S.* x *arendsii* 'Touran Lime Green'
Both create a lovely evergreen mound. March – late summer. 10-15cm. USDA 5a-7b.

For details of the two *Cyclamen coum* shown in pot right, but not above, see page 14.



RINGING IN SPRING

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

Helleborus x *sahinii* 'Winterbells' inspired this design, based on reminders of winter and heralds of spring. It flowers for several months and performs as well in a shady border as it does in pots. It feels moody and dark, and with the winter colouring of the ivy, fits perfectly in this old cauldron. Anemones are the epitome of spring and the dainty blue form of *Anemone blanda* lifts the colour and texture of the scheme while keeping it deep and dusky.

How to achieve the look

The hellebore displays a beautiful spectrum of colours in its bell-shaped flowers as well as the stems and leaves. I love the way it contrasts with the blue of the anemones. The purple stems and veined leaves also go well with the darker markings of the ivy, which leads down to the rusty pattern of the iron pot. The anemones lighten the feel and structure of the display, making it more interesting and acutely seasonal. You could also use white anemones, but I think the blue adds more depth.

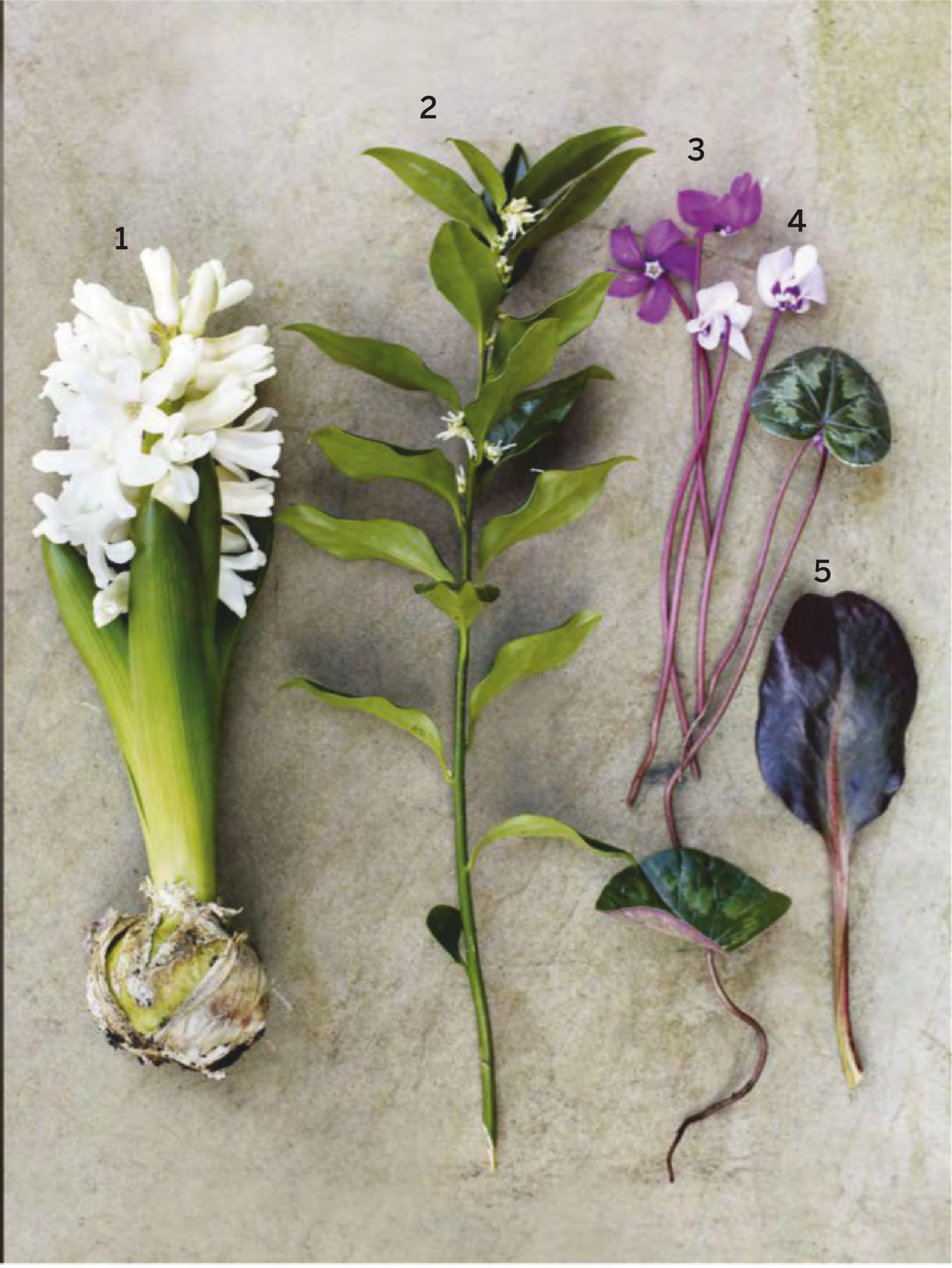
I found this cauldron buried in a border when tidying a friend's garden years ago and love the colour, the streaks of rust and especially the shape. Hellebores do not like to be too wet, so drainage is very important. I drilled six drainage holes of about 5mm in diameter and covered with terracotta crocks and grit, but you could also use gravel to ensure good drainage. The compost is an equal mixture of John Innes No.2 and multi-purpose compost to keep the plants moist but well drained. This pot requires little maintenance, apart from watering, and I usually take off any flowers that have gone over and remove yellow leaves, especially as the anemones become dormant. I am sure this display would work well for another season, and if the ivy gets too dominant, just use a pair of sharp secateurs to keep it in check.

Plants

1 *Anemone blanda*
This anemone comes in a natural variation of blue, pink and white. It does well in the garden, likes the sun in spring and prefers moist but free-draining soil, ideally under shrubs or in a woodland position. February – March. 15cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

2 *Helleborus* x *sahinii* 'Winterbells'
Named after Kees Sahin, in honour of the founder of the Dutch seed company where it was raised. January – April. 40-50cm. USDA 4a-9b.

3 *Hedera helix*
Being evergreen, small-leaved ivy cultivars are invaluable for pots in winter and early spring. Ivy is easily propagated by cuttings and the size can be restricted by pruning. 2m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.



HEAVEN SCENT

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

Being greeted by a cloud of fragrance when you open the front door is a great start to the day. The perfume emanating from this arrangement will welcome you for weeks and the flowers will last equally long. This pot captures some of my favourite scents of early spring, while the strong green of the *Sarcococca confusa*, the marbled leaves of cyclamen and the purple of the *Bergenia cordifolia* look great just outside the door. White, pink and purple flowers lift the arrangement and together create a strong planting scheme.

How to achieve the look

The dark leaves of *Sarcococca confusa* work well as a backdrop in floral arrangements. The scent of the flowers is an added bonus. Cyclamen provide an attractive contrast, with their exquisite flowers and grey-patterned leaves. You can really appreciate them close up in a pot. Hyacinths are the temporary stars of this planting scheme. I started them in pots, so they are all at different stages of flowering, which leads to a more natural look and prolongs flowering. *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Overture' is one of the best plants for dark-red leaves in winter. It provides contrast in terms of shape, and the colour has a calming, complementary effect on the arrangement. Later in spring, magenta flowers appear on tall, scarlet stems.

This simple terracotta pot had been whitewashed and used repeatedly in the garden. The pattern of algae on the paint mirrors the leaves of the cyclamen and contrasts with the other plants. As there is only one hole in the pot, I used a generous layer of terracotta crocks and grit for drainage and a mixture of John Innes No.2 and multi-purpose compost with extra grit. This combination also looks good without flowers and should last for another season, given some watering and a liquid feed.

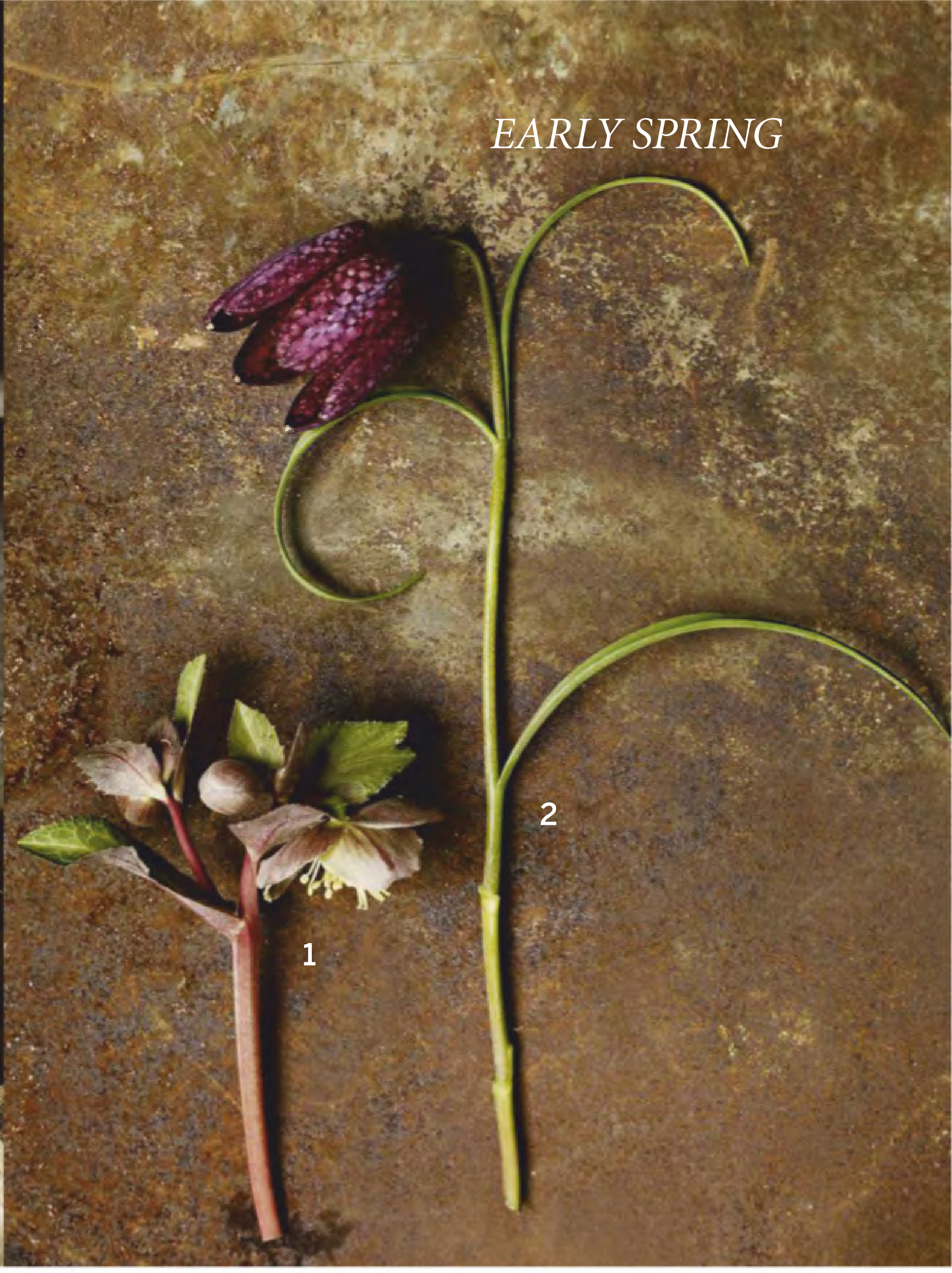
Plants

1 *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Fairy White'
I usually pot some bulbs and move them into the greenhouse to use them earlier and over a longer period. March. 20-30cm. USDA 4a-8b.

2 *Sarcococca confusa*
Evergreen shrub with tiny, fragrant, white flowers. Can be kept shorter by pruning. December – March. 2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

3 *Cyclamen coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album' and
4 *C. coum* f. *coum*
Both are a jewel in any arrangement, with delicate flowers in white and pink. *Cyclamen coum* are also ideal planted under hedges or shrubs in the garden, as it tends to be drier in summer. February – March. 10cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

5 *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Overture'
A very attractive cultivar with magenta flowers on tall stems. I also enjoy using them as cut flowers. March – April. 20-30cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.



PATINA OF AGE

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

For many, Sissinghurst is the epitome of an English garden, but the plant choices were often influenced by the travels of its creators (Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson), with bulbs such as *Fritillaria* from Iran and Turkey used to bring a dash of mystery. Our native *Fritillaria mealagris* is equally alluring and here I've used it in one of Vita's pewter vases; its metal is etched with the garden's history that connects with the richness and intricacy of the flowers.

How to achieve the look

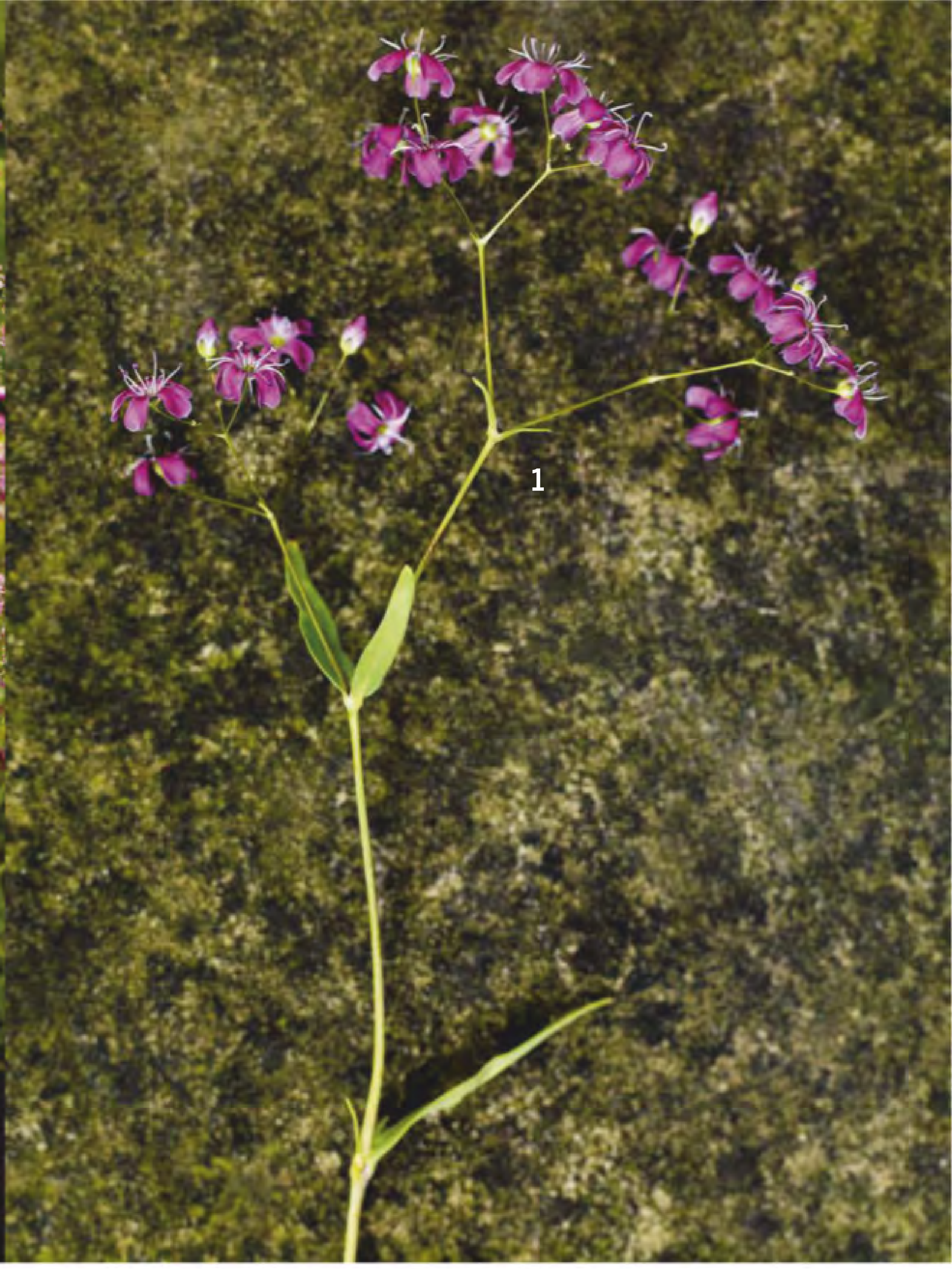
Vita loved to experiment with growing different plants and combinations in containers of different sizes, and likened this miniature form of gardening to a jeweller working in precious stones. Fittingly, I've chosen two jewel-like plants for this display. *Fritillaria mealagris,* described by Vita as 'a sombre, sinister little flower', has for me something of the feel of a Fabergé egg. The checkerboard patterns of its flowers – reminiscent of a painting by Seurat – are ravishingly beautiful and worthy of close inspection. In tandem with the more muscular yet refined *Helleborus lividus,* the display connects effortlessly back to the garden and doesn't feel as though I've tried too hard to create it. To enjoy these fleeting moments caught in flower is when pot culture excites me the most. For both of these delicate treasures to thrive I need to raise them out of the garden's heavy Wealden clay, and to do this, containers of various styles and design have always been used throughout the different areas of Sissinghurst.

Whatever style of pot you choose, drainage holes are a must; even if the plants are only in the pot for a few weeks, they will not like it, and the roots will be damaged. For metal containers, use a metal drill to make three 8mm holes. For the growing medium, I always aim to use peat-free compost with added leaf mould and up to 6mm grit. Whatever type of pot you use, always make sure you leave a centimetre or so between the soil and the rim of the pot to allow for watering.

Plants

1 *Helleborus lividus*
A slightly tender hellebore from the Balearic Islands. The green tripartite leaves are beautifully grey-veined, similar to those of cyclamen. Its flowers are pinkish grey-green with a slight perfume. January – April. 40cm. RHS H4, USDA 8a-9b.

2 *Fritillaria meleagris*
A flower of incomparable beauty, the native snake's head fritillary revels in damp meadows, where it gently self-seeds. The flowers are mostly a rich, jewel-like, pinkish purple, but it will occasionally throw up a white flower. April – May. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.



BOWLED OVER

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

I often bed out the pretty *Gypsophila elegans* 'Kermesina' in the garden but I tend to keep a few back in 9cm pots, rather than move them on into larger pots. Restricting the pot size causes them to bolt and flower sooner. Also having lots of plants in smaller pots gives me greater freedom when I'm putting displays together. In the house, I sometimes arrange them in a line along a mantelpiece or windowsill or en masse in a larger pot. Here, I have put this bowl in an elevated position – quite high on an oak table – so the eye can appreciate its lovely shape and decoration. I also like the way the base disappears into the shadow cast by the bowl on the table.

How to achieve the look

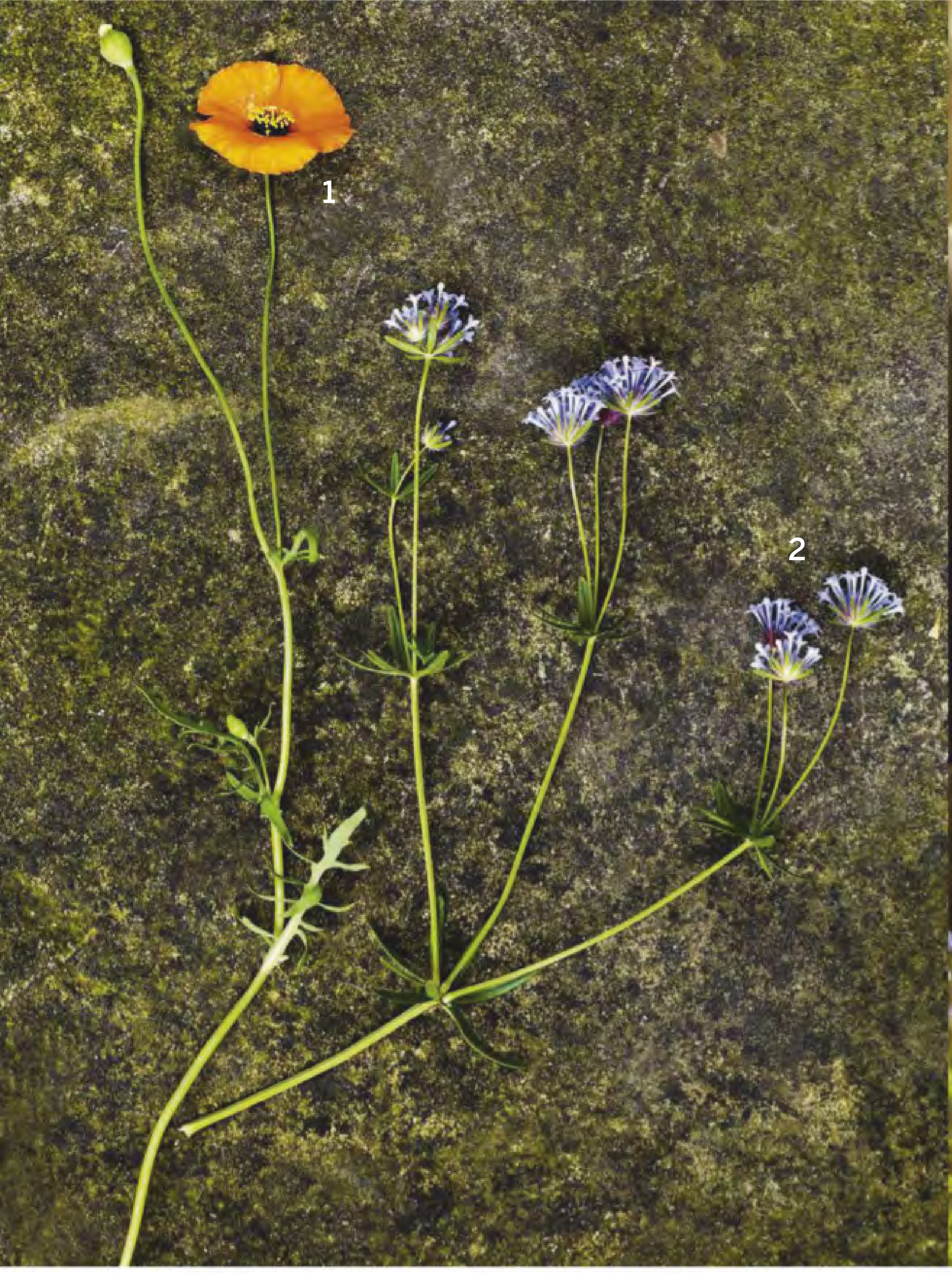
Unfortunately, this bowl has only one drainage hole, so I had to take measures to accommodate this shortfall. First, I placed two small crocks (pieces of broken pot) loosely over the hole, then over the crocks I mounded up a handful of sharp gravel to form a cone. This provides a larger surface area and much better drainage – alpine plant enthusiasts often employ this method to achieve good drainage. Be careful not to unsettle the gravel when filling the pot with compost.

I place the tallest plants to the centre and work outwards, blending the wiry branching inflorescences from one neighbour on to the next, gradually building a swarm of tiny, rose-pink flowers. As I plant, I add discreet twigs to support the stems, adding the bushiest plants last so they drape over the edge.

I bought this bowl at an auction and I love it as much for its shape as its decoration. It is attributed to the Compton Pottery and around the side it has a Celtic love-knot band that hints of influence from Arts and Crafts designer Archibald Knox, who worked occasionally with the pottery founder, Mary Watts. Compton pots have become highly collectable and can therefore demand high prices, but they do still come up in salerooms and at car boot sales for a reasonable price.

Plant

1 *Gypsophila elegans* 'Kermesina'
An annual from the Caucasus. *G. elegans* 'Kermesina' is the pink form and is shorter than the more commonly grown white-flowered version. In this pot I have used 16 plants. Will flower in early spring from overwintered plants. 50cm.



ALL AFLUTTER

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

I remember the first time I saw the flowers of the *Stylomecon heterophylla* (wind poppy) unfurling from a typical poppy bud; I was captivated by the unusual burnt-orange colour. The flowers are composed of thin, satin-textured petals, held well above brittle, blue-green foliage on slender stems. They are never still and always skittish. It only takes a whisper of wind and they'll come alive, hence the common name. Also, somewhat surprisingly for such a showy flower, it's mildly scented – reminiscent of lily of the valley. The poppies are planted randomly through the tank and I have woven *Asperula orientalis* (blue woodruff) between them.

How to achieve the look

I make sure I use the whole of the container and plant right to the lip, so the plants spill over and soften the edge. The tiny, sky-blue flowers and fresh, spring-green foliage of the blue woodruff are a good foil and contrast well against the larger poppy flowers. This attractive, little-used procumbent plant is well worth growing and is as useful as groundcover in the garden for weaving between perennials as it is in containers.

Both of these plants shed their petals discreetly so no deadheading is necessary. They do, however, need support and I have provided this using a delicate skeleton of twigs – the tips of hazel or hornbeam are good. Add them in soon after planting, and they will quickly disappear as they are consumed by the foliage.

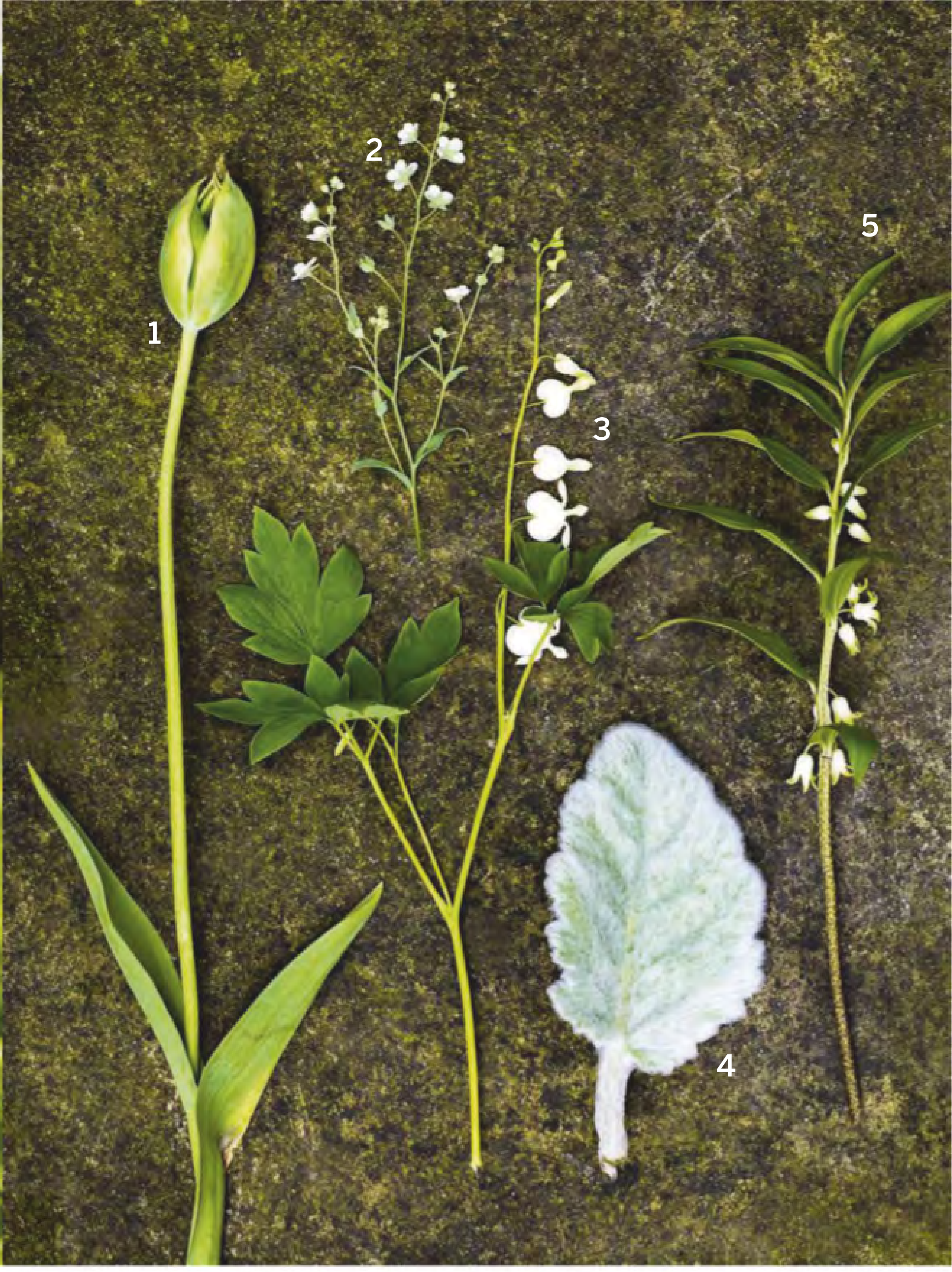
This lead water tank had been loitering behind the glasshouse when I arrived at Malverleys. We put it next to the entrance of the walled garden on a pair of Yorkstone slabs. It makes the perfect host for plants; it looks good and is deep enough to hold a good amount of soil so watering is not a major concern.

To encourage sharp drainage, I have filled the bottom third of the tank with broken pots, and then topped it up with John Innes No.2, lightened with peat at a ratio of 5:1.

Plants

1 *Stylomecon heterophylla* 'Copper Queen'
A selection of a Californian annual that can be grown easily from seed. Autumn-sown plants flower in spring; spring-sown in the summer. I've used five plants here. 50cm.

2 *Asperula orientalis*
Spreading annual with vivid green foliage and tiny, blue flowers. Sow in autumn under glass for early plants. I've used 11 plants here. 30cm.



JOLLY GOOD SHOW

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

I like to embellish paved areas of the garden with seasonal pot displays – an idea inherited from working at Great Dixter. Plants are put into terracotta pots, preferably old and weathered, and placed in groups next to doorways, on steps or near a table, where they can be enjoyed and easily maintained. To prevent the show from being too fussy, each pot is restricted to one species. This enables you to add new plants and subtract older ones without upsetting the arrangement too much. This display use a limited palette of grey, green and white, with different shapes and textures.

How to achieve the look

The five plants highlighted above are woven into a larger display. I place larger plants on bricks at the back so they're not hidden, with small plants at the front and a mixture of sizes in the middle. *Beschorneria septentrionalis*, with its stiff, sword-shaped leaves makes a strong focal point at the back. Without it, the focus would shift to the fat, silvery leaves of the *Salvia argentea*, so I keep these elements apart to maintain balance. In the centre, the perpendicular stems and oval flowers of *Tulipa* 'Evergreen' contrast with the small flowers and glaucous leaves of the *Omphalodes linifolia*. Next to the *Beschorneria*, a small *Aralia elata* 'Variegata' with sparse, leafy branches reaches above the compact, prickly *Berkheya purpurea*. At the front is the rigid, succulent *Echeveria secunda* with a bloomy texture. Beside it is *Artemisia schmidtiana* 'Nana'. Above this is a *Disporopsis pernyi* with upright, curved stems bearing white, pendent flowers, and next to this is *Pinus strobus* with long, pendent strands of thin silvery needles. Then, *Astelia banksii* with clean, upward slivers of glistening silver, and beyond is *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 'Alba', its arching racemes decked in pendent, white flowers showing up well against the yew.

Plants

1 *Tulipa* 'Evergreen'
This green-flowered tulip is the longest flowering of all tulips and can go on for two months – it should be more widely grown. I've used 25 bulbs per pot. April – May. 60cm.

2 *Omphalodes linifolia*
Charming annual with forget-me-not-like flowers in pure white. Twelve plants per pot. March – June. 40cm. AGM. RHS H3.

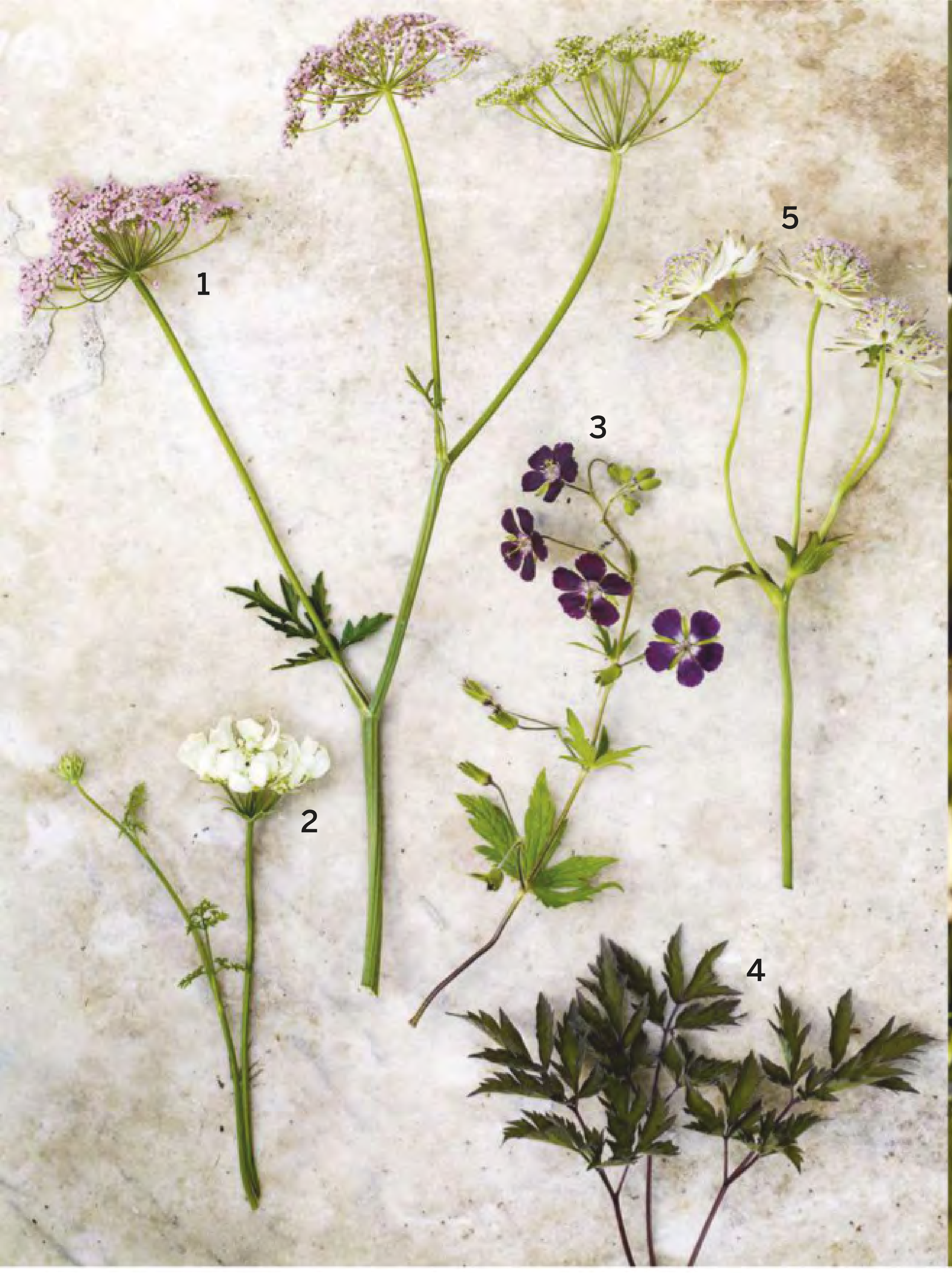
3 *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 'Alba'
Very elegant, white-flowered form of the bleeding heart (formerly known as *Dicentra spectabilis* 'Alba'). Three plants per pot. April – June. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

4 *Salvia argentea*
A biennial, grown chiefly for its foliage, which is best in the first year. Three plants per pot. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5.

5 *Disporopsis pernyi*
A slowly spreading woodland perennial, with glossy foliage and pendent, white flowers. Three plants per pot. May – July. 30cm.

SPRING

Perennials are starting to flower now and containers can become more creative. Pretty, loose planting in pastel shades and combinations of cool, spring-green foliage with pops of bolder colour dominate. Look out for unusual gems at plant fairs and intriguing containers to plant up as lovely focal points in the garden.



SMOULDERING PINKS

WORDS JACKY MILLS

In May, the lanes around our house in the Welsh Marches are awash with froths of cow parsley, flecked with pink from red campion and ragged robin. Lines of hawthorn hedge, smothered in creamy-white flowers, are frequently interrupted by copper beeches, resplendent in their distinctive purple foliage. I chose a dark-leaved form of *Actaea simplex* for the foundation of this pink-and-white arrangement. Set in an old, oak half-barrel from our local cider maker, it is a perfect celebration of the Herefordshire countryside.

How to achieve the look

Half barrels make great containers, but scale of planting is the key to success. A minimum pot to plant height ratio of 1:1.5 is preferable. The oak of this barrel has aged to a beautiful, silvery-grey enriched by the rusted iron bands holding it together. I keep a permanent collection of large shrubs in aged oak barrels at home as they allow sufficient soil for a long-term planting and require less watering. Ensure good drainage by placing crocks over holes drilled through the base. I used John Innes No.2 and plenty of leaf mould as these perennials prefer a humus-rich soil positioned in partial shade. In late summer the *Actaea* produces tall, narrow plumes of pink buds opening to white flowers. These are followed by lime-green seedpods. The pale, greenish-pink pincushions of the *Astrantia* 'Buckland' make it an excellent cut flower, as do the scented pink umbels of the *Pimpinella* and the creamy-white flowers of *Orlaya grandiflora.* This self-seeding annual can be sown in autumn and spring, to produce a constant supply of flowers. For contrast, I've added a dark form of *Geranium phaeum* with inky-purple flowers, similar to *G. phaeum* 'Raven'. Reduce its tendency to self-seed and encourage repeat blooms by cutting back after flowering.

Plants

1 *Pimpinella major* 'Rosea'
Non-spreading, herbaceous umbellifier. May – July. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b†.

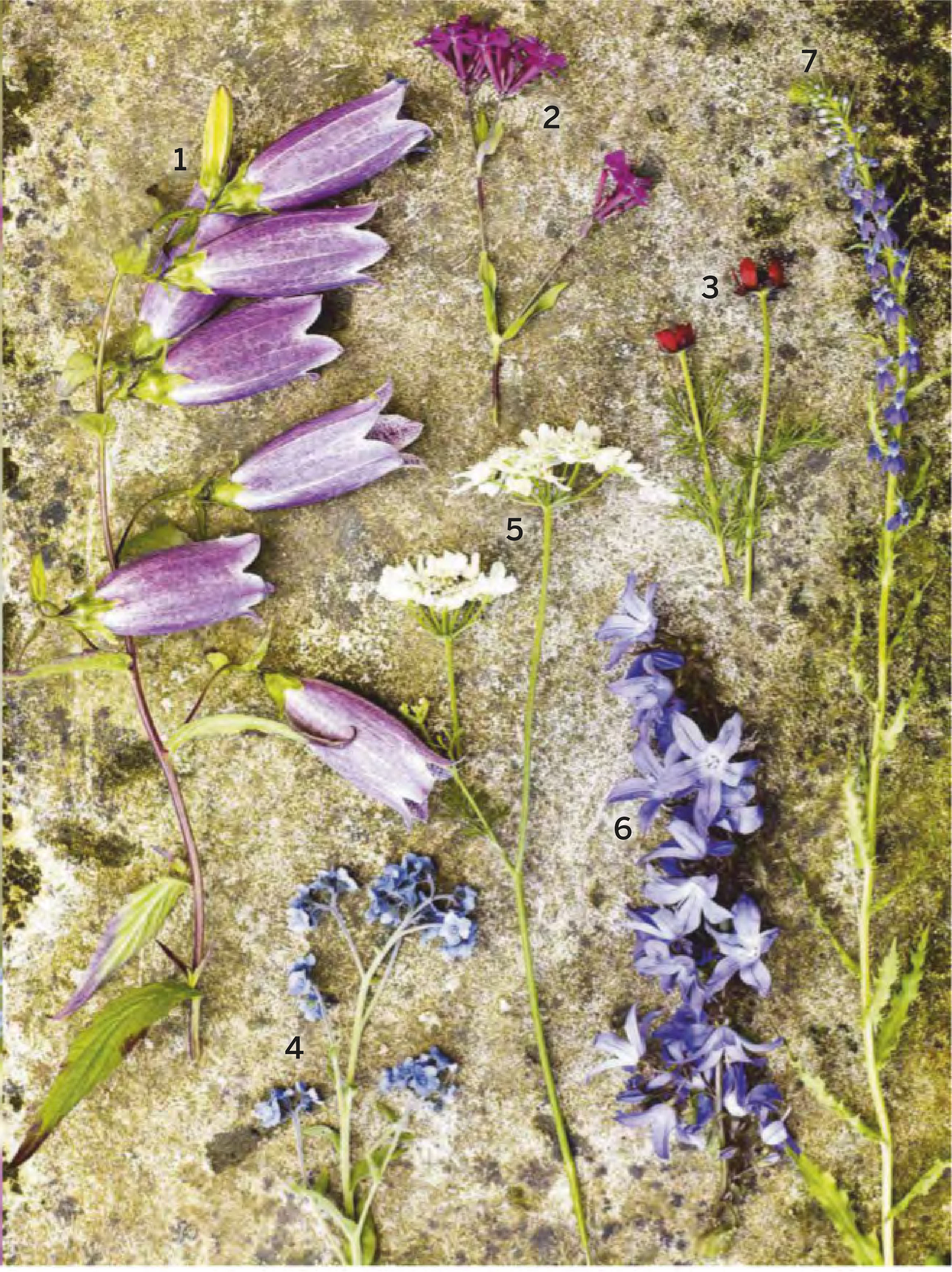
2 *Orlaya grandiflora*
A hardy annual with ferny foliage and delicate, scabious-like, white flowers. May – October. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H7.

3 *Geranium phaeum*
A herbaceous perennial that is tolerant of a range of conditions including deep, dry shade. May – July. 60cm. USDA 5a-7b.

4 *Actaea simplex* (Atropurpurea Group) 'Brunette'
A tall, hardy, herbaceous perennial with dark-purple, serrated foliage. In late summer it produces bottle-brush spikes of scented flowers. August – October. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8a.

5 *Astrantia* 'Buckland'
An exceptionally free-flowering sterile hybrid, so it won't self-seed everywhere. May – August. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



PIPE DREAMS

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

A friend of mine, who was clearing out his shed, gave me these sections of old drainage pipe. They're the perfect disguise for ordinary black-plastic, three-litre pots lodged snugly into the top, and remain steadfast even when the compost is wet and heavy. Most of the plants in this arrangement have been grown from seed, apart from the procumbent *Campanula poscharskyana* and the *Thalictrum tuberosum*. Overall the feel of the composition is somewhat wild and includes a few new plants that I wanted to get to know better before I used them in the garden. I've top-dressed the soil surface with sphagnum moss.

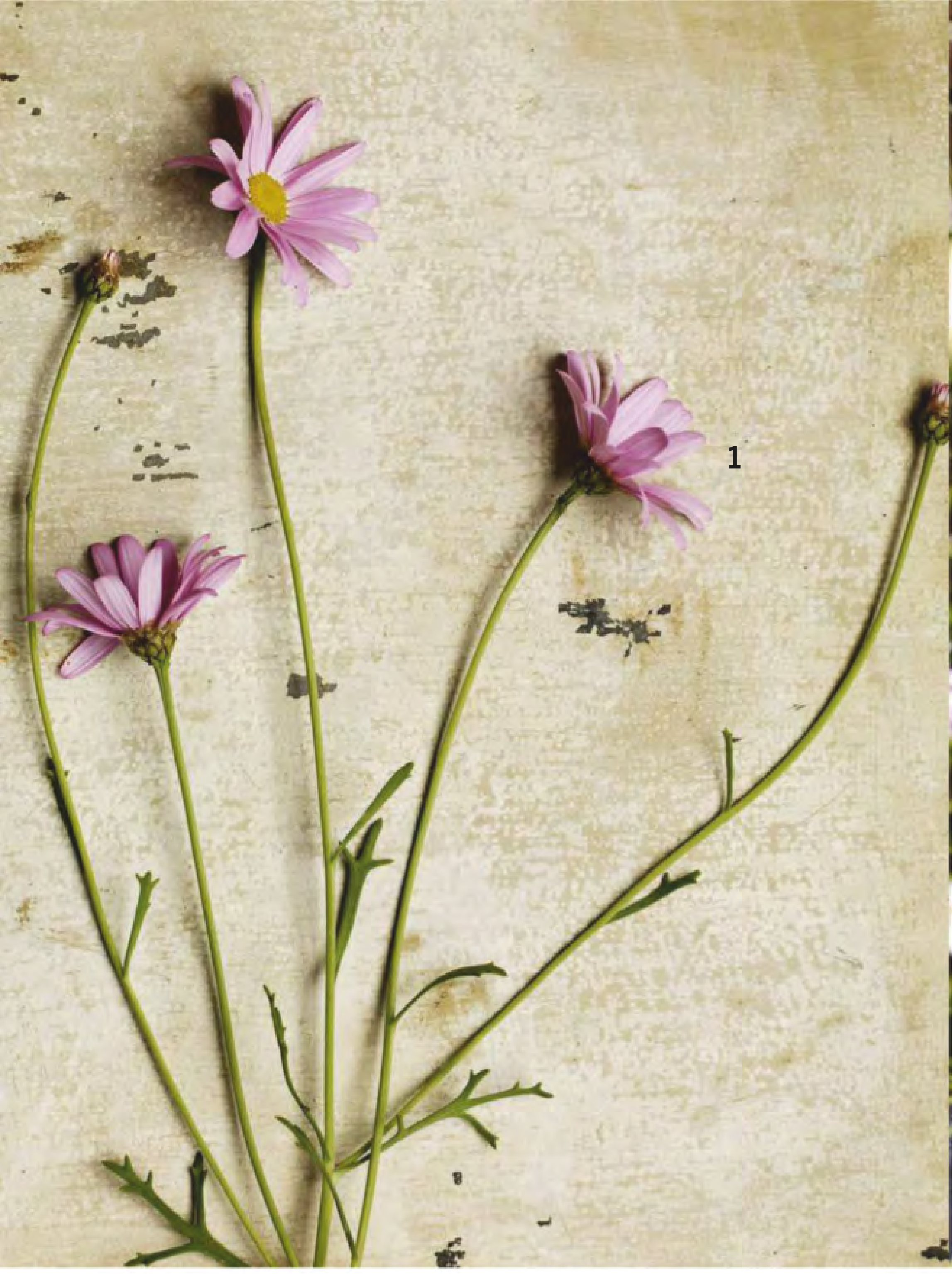
How to achieve the look

The showiest plant here is *Campanula punctata* f. *rubriflora*, with its long, pendent, rose-purple bellflowers held on loose spikes. At the back are the slender spines of *Lobelia fenestralis*. It favours warmer climes but has such a lovely fine habit I thought it worth a try. Another first is the pheasant's eye (*Adonis aestivalis*), which I've wanted to grow for some time. Its flowers are a glossy, blood red and foliage is a fresh green. It has a branching habit and I love it. The flowers close at night and in dull weather, but this doesn't bother me. Next year I might combine it in the garden with the blue *Hackelia floribunda* at the back right of this vignette. This is a very easy annual, although the seeds are devils to get off clothing. Next to this are the chalky-white umbels of *Orlaya grandiflora*, the bright-pink catchfly, *Silene armeria*, and, near the front, the diminutive, white meadow rue *Thalictrum tuberosum* (not shown above). Trailing over the edge on to the Yorkstone is the violet-blue bellflower *Campanula poscharskyana*.

To make the whole display more appealing, I cut the clay pipes into various lengths with a diamond-bladed circular saw. The pipes are arranged on a Yorkstone slab and the plastic pots shoehorned into the top of each tube.

Plants

1 *Campanula punctata* f. *rubriflora*
Perennial with darker freckling on the inside of the flowers. Deadheading prolongs display. June – August. 40cm. RHS H7.
2 *Silene armeria*
Hardy annual. For larger plants, sow in autumn to flower in June. 40cm. USDA 5a-8b.
3 *Adonis aestivalis*
Hardy annual, known as pheasant's eye. Sow January – March to flower in June. 50cm. RHS H4.
4 *Hackelia floribunda*
Hardy annual with many flowers. Sow February – March. 60cm. USDA 3a-7b.
5 *Orlaya grandiflora*
Hardy annual. Sow late September, overwinter in cold frame, and plant out in March. May – October. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7.
6 *Campanula poscharskyana*
Spreading perennial with violet-blue flowers. June – September. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
7 *Lobelia fenestralis*
A newly introduced perennial native to southern USA and Mexico. 1m.



HAPHAZARD LUXURIANCE

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

Colour provides the base note for any garden and it is the most potent design tool a gardener has. Gardening with colour is not about individual plants, but how plants with different colours are combined. Often, as with this display, the container is the starting point. This copper pot immediately suggested a pink *Argyranthemum* that would effortlessly complement the pot's verdigris patina and look deliciously fresh against the yellow Banksian rose behind.

How to achieve the look

In this arrangement, I studied the colour of each ingredient, including the copper pot and the neighbouring plants, before deciding on the colour and shape of the flower to use in the display.

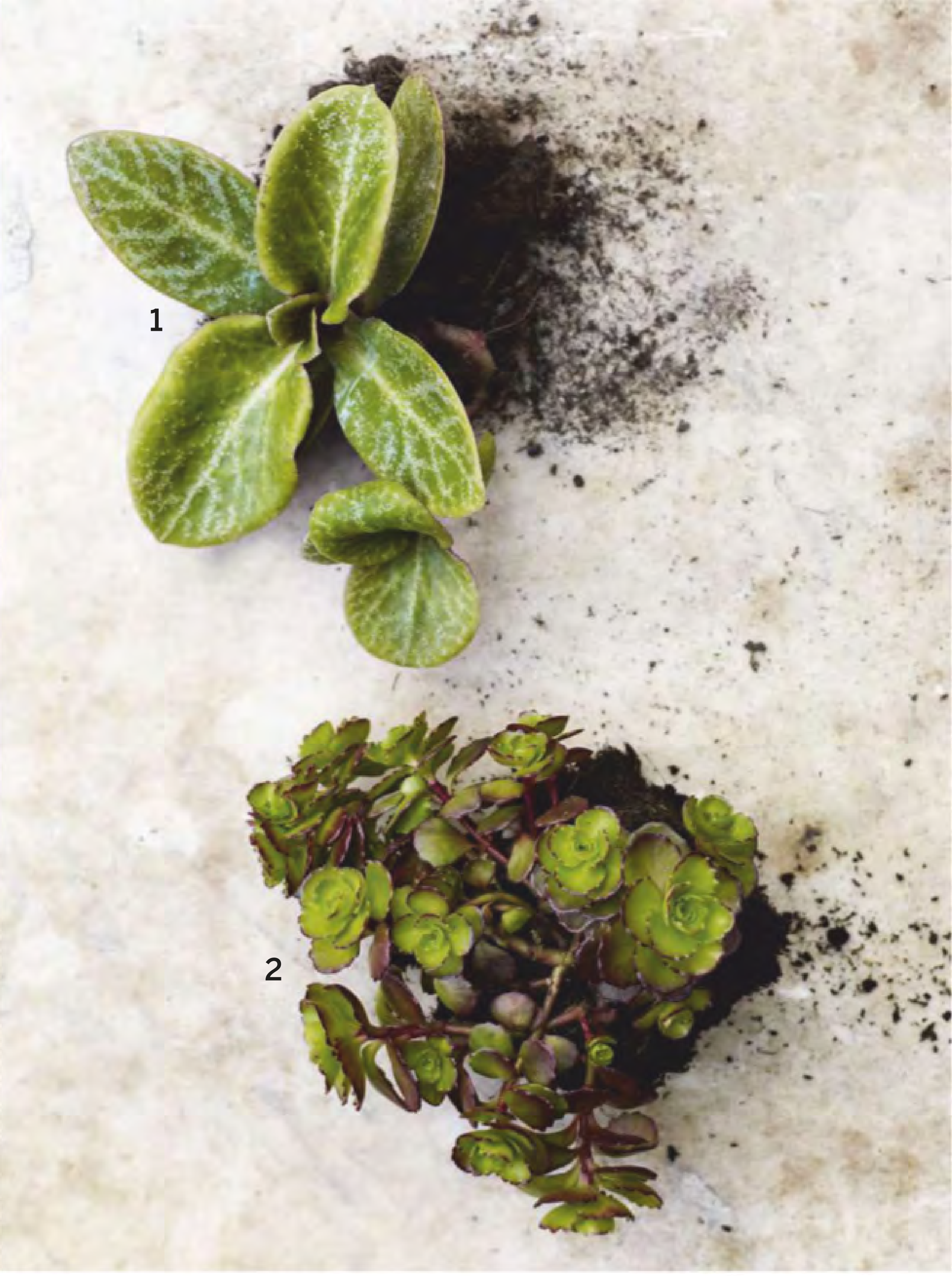
The pot sets the narrative – it's the colour of the Adriatic Sea and is embedded in the history of the garden at Sissinghurst and the lives of all who have gardened here; any plant is merely a supporting player. To bring the colour alive, I've chosen a pink form of *Argyranthemum*, a native of the Canary Islands. Both its grey-green leaves and daisy-like pink flowers work beautifully with the blue of the copper pot while the yellow boss at the centre of each pink flower socialises well with the *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea' that swirls and eddies around the arrangement from April through to June. I purposefully chose to contrast the ruggedness of the pot with the informal planting that generously spills and sprawls lending a lavish and romantic quality. In the pot, I've used a peat-free compost with added leaf mould and up to 6mm grit.

To link the pot to its surroundings, I've planted more *Argyranthemum* around the base, and this combines perfectly with other low-growing plants to give a lovely, dissolved, fraying feeling towards the edges. Behind the display, the exuberance of the tumbling *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea', foaming and frothing in abundance with butter-yellow, rosette-like flowers, enhances the overall feeling of haphazard luxuriance I so desired.

Plant

1 *Argyranthemum* 'Petite Pink'
A woody-based, evergreen perennial or sub-shrub, from the Canary Islands, with blue-green, dissected linear foliage and numerous flowers. Its daisy-like flowers bloom from late spring to autumn. 50cm. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 10a-11.

Also look out for the older pink cultivar *Argyranthemum* 'Mary Wootton' (70cm), which has large, anemone-centred, soft-pink flowers or the long-flowering, semi-shrubby cultivar *Argyranthemum* 'Jamaica Primrose' (90cm) with soft-yellow flowers.



SHADES OF GREEN

WORDS JACKY MILLS

I found this lovely wooden box hidden in my parents' coal shed. Complete with rusted handle and slatted base, it made an ideal container for the succulents I'd bought on impulse at a plant fair. The fleshy, two-toned leaves of the *Crassula streyi* had caught my eye and I thought they would combine well with sedums. After finding out they actually grow on shady, rocky ledges in South Africa, I teamed them with creeping mats of a stonecrop that can tolerate dappled shade.

How to achieve the look

Succulents look great in containers, from traditional stone troughs to contemporary living walls. This box is perfect for those requiring a well-drained soil. I lined the base with hessian to contain the compost, then added a layer of gravel followed by John Innes No.1 compost combined with plenty of sharp grit and top-dressed with more gravel.

The predominantly green rosettes of the stonecrop *Sedum spurium* 'Fuldaglut' are delicately edged in red and will eventually spill over the sides. In summer they will produce tufted red flowers to complement the wonderful carmine of the crassula leaves, whose red underside is an adaption to gather light. They can grow in full sun but the leaves will be paler and less vigorous.

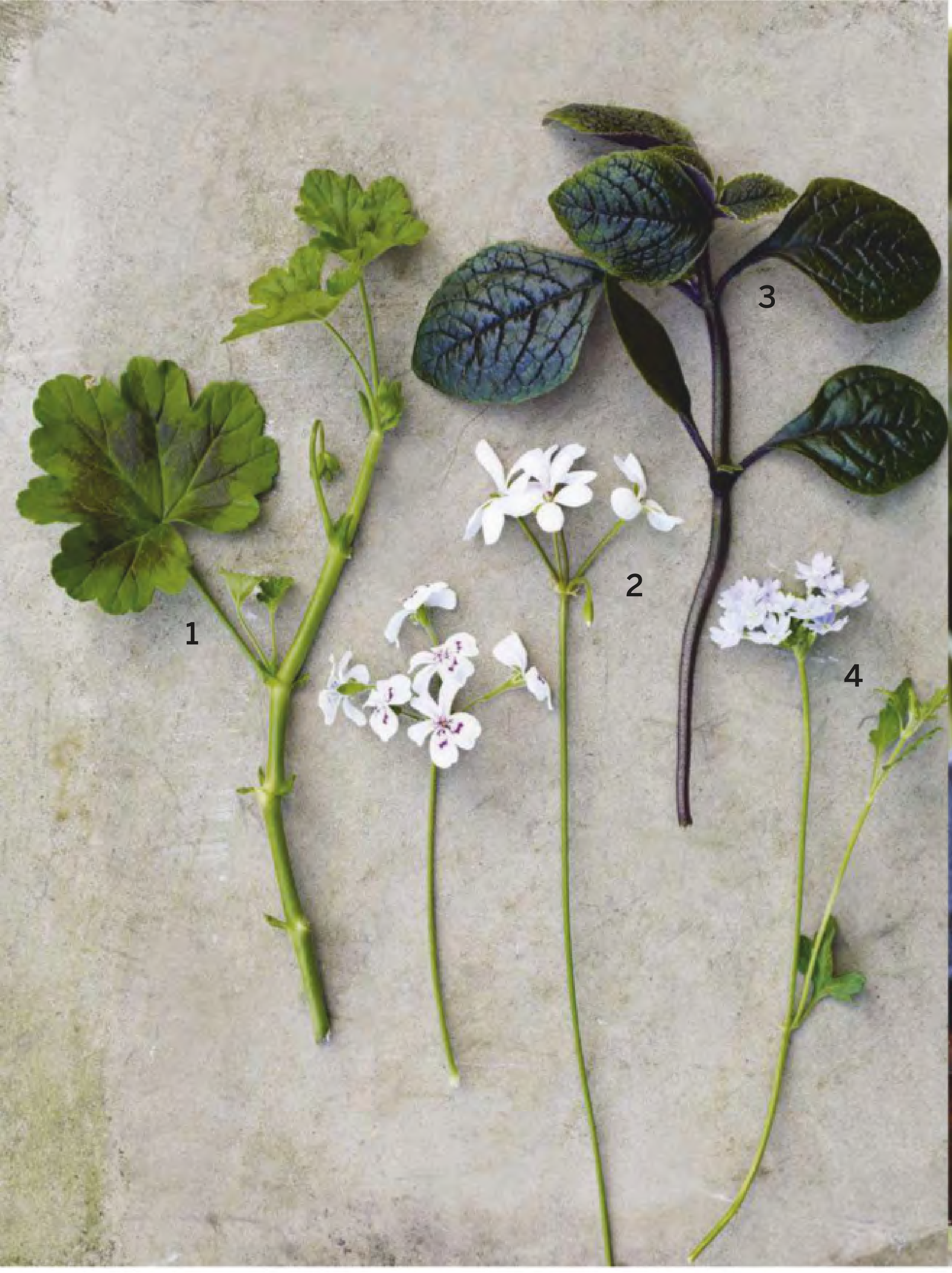
The joy of experimenting with plant combinations in containers is that they can be moved to different conditions if they are not thriving. Most sedums, unlike the crassula, like full sun and will happily colonise in well-drained soil in paving, walls and gravel gardens. *Sedum spurium* 'Fuldaglut' is one that will tolerate some dappled shade, as will cultivars such as the dark-leaved 'Voodoo'.

Crassula streyi is not widely available and needs protection from frost. As an alternative, you could try *Crassula ovata* 'Undulata', which has wavy, fleshy green leaves, or one of the many sempervivums that have similar colours and like a sunny, well-drained spot. All are members of the *Crassulaceae* family.

Plants

1 *Crassula streyi*
A tender, evergreen succulent with fleshy leaves and sprays of tiny white flowers at the end of winter. 15-35cm. USDA 10b-11.

2 *Sedum spurium* 'Fuldaglut'
Deciduous and shade tolerant, this hardy succulent makes excellent groundcover and its late-summer flowers are loved by bees. 15cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.



COOL CUSTOMER

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

May is the month for planting up summer displays. Most of the plants in the garden are grown from cuttings from the previous season, but a few are bought or traded in. The display on the terrace is kept very cool and calm to work with the surrounding green and grey planting, and with the box, *Osmanthus* and yew topiary. The moss growing on the pot links it beautifully with the old Yorkstone and the white paint sets off the planting.

How to achieve the look

I fell in love with *Pelargonium* 'White Boar' when I spotted it outside the front door of a Cotswolds vicarage. To complement the dark-patterned foliage, I combine it with *Plectranthus ciliatus*, pinching out the tips of the shoots regularly to prevent it from flowering. *Pelargonium* 'Blandfordianum Album', helps to link the colour of the planting with the pot. *Glandularia* Aztec Silver Magic (= 'Balazsilma') provides more depth with its dark-green, divided leaves, and the flowers provide additional interest in shape and colour.

The old terracotta pot was whitewashed with greenhouse shading paint and after one season was colonised by algae and moss. The container will spend the summer on the terrace, with a lot of sun and attention. A layer of crocks provides good drainage and an equal mixture of John Innes No.2 and high-quality, multi-purpose compost will give it a good start.

Deadheading is essential and I feed all containers weekly with a balanced liquid fertiliser to make sure plants flower well into the autumn. I also weave shoots through the display to ensure balanced development. Some staking may be necessary, especially in an exposed position. There is always a plant that wants to take over and one that is happy to retreat, but by the end of summer this should be an interesting display.

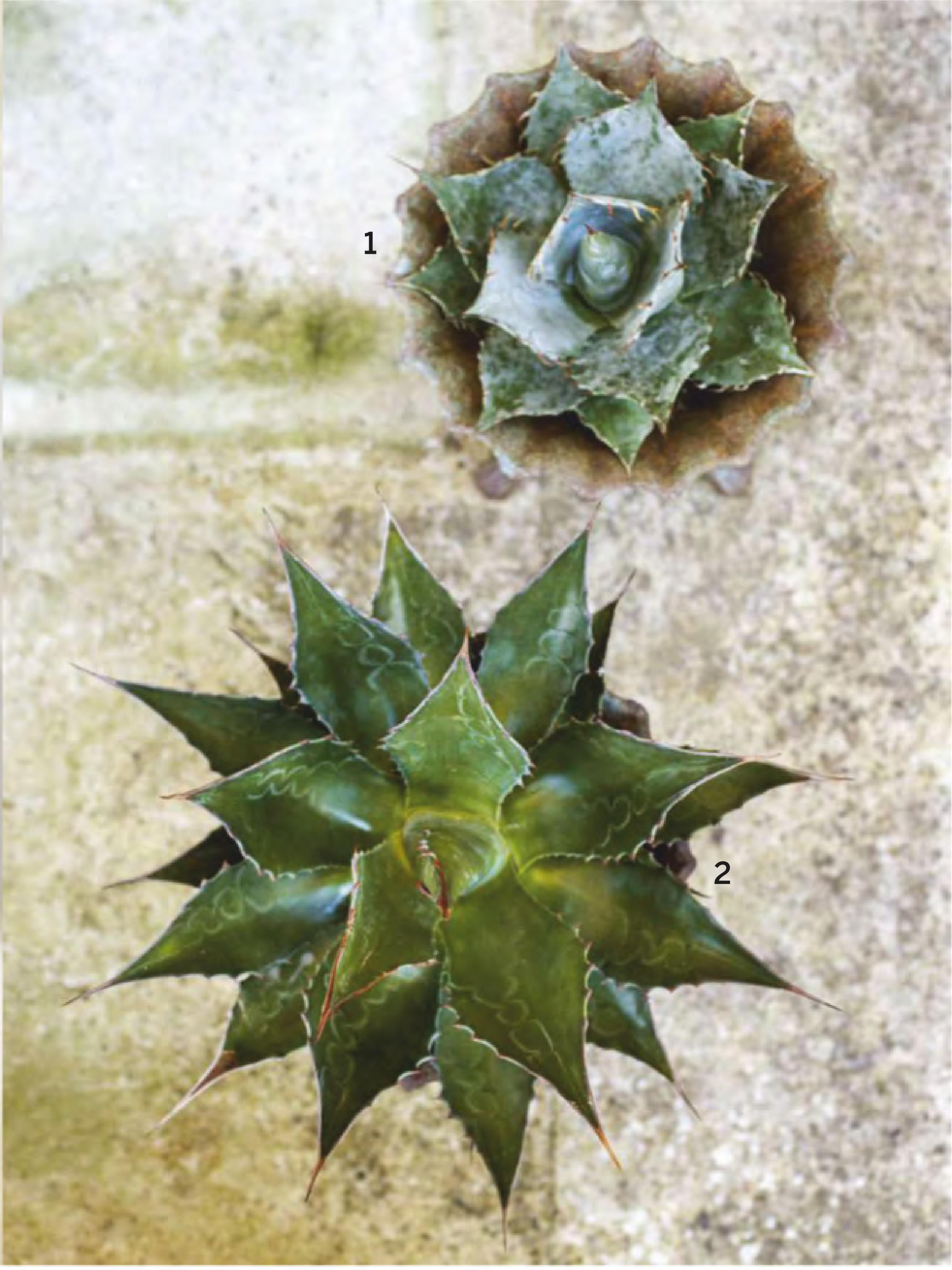
Plants

1 *Pelargonium* 'Blandfordianum Album'
Very often trailing, this pelargonium is easy to weave through other plants. Grey, deep-cut leaves add interest to any planting scheme and the flower markings are just divine. April – September. 90cm. USDA 9a-11.

2 *Pelargonium* 'White Boar'
With simple, pure-white flowers, this plant withstands rain well and is free flowering. April – October. 40cm.

3 *Plectranthus ciliatus*
Maroon-purple leaves with lilac-pink flowers. Sun and semi-shade. June – September. 60cm. USDA 10a-11.

4 *Glandularia* Aztec Silver Magic (= 'Balazsilma')
Lush, dark-green leaves and lavender-coloured flowers all summer. Keep deadheading. May – October. 30cm. AGM. USDA 10a-11.



STAR URNS

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

I bought this small pair of campana urns from an antique shop in Berkshire. I had seen similar ones before, but not with the small lion paws on each corner of the base; this made them a little bit special. I decided to plant them up with a pair of agaves I'd bought in Cornwall – an *Agave parrasana* and a larger *A. montana.* I like the sculptural qualities of these agave rosettes, which are horribly beautiful. From above, their fierce leaves are arranged in an ordered spiral pattern that is reminiscent of an unfurling rosebud, but each muscular leaf of the *Agave montana* is armed with the sharpest needle-like points and spines reminiscent of sharks' teeth.

How to achieve the look

Agaves make excellent pot plants as they have a relatively small root system and are able to withstand long periods of drought. The golden rule for most is to make sure they never sit with wet roots, particularly during the cooler months.

I use a John Innes No.2 compost and a sharp horticultural grit mixture at a ratio of 50:50. I also put extra grit in the base of the urns for the extra-sharp drainage. Wearing thick leather gloves – it's important you use proper protection when potting agaves – centre the plant in the middle of the urn with one hand and then feed compost around it with your other hand. Use the end of a cane, which can get between the fierce leaves where fingers can't reach, to force the substrate home and make sure there are no air-pockets in the compost.

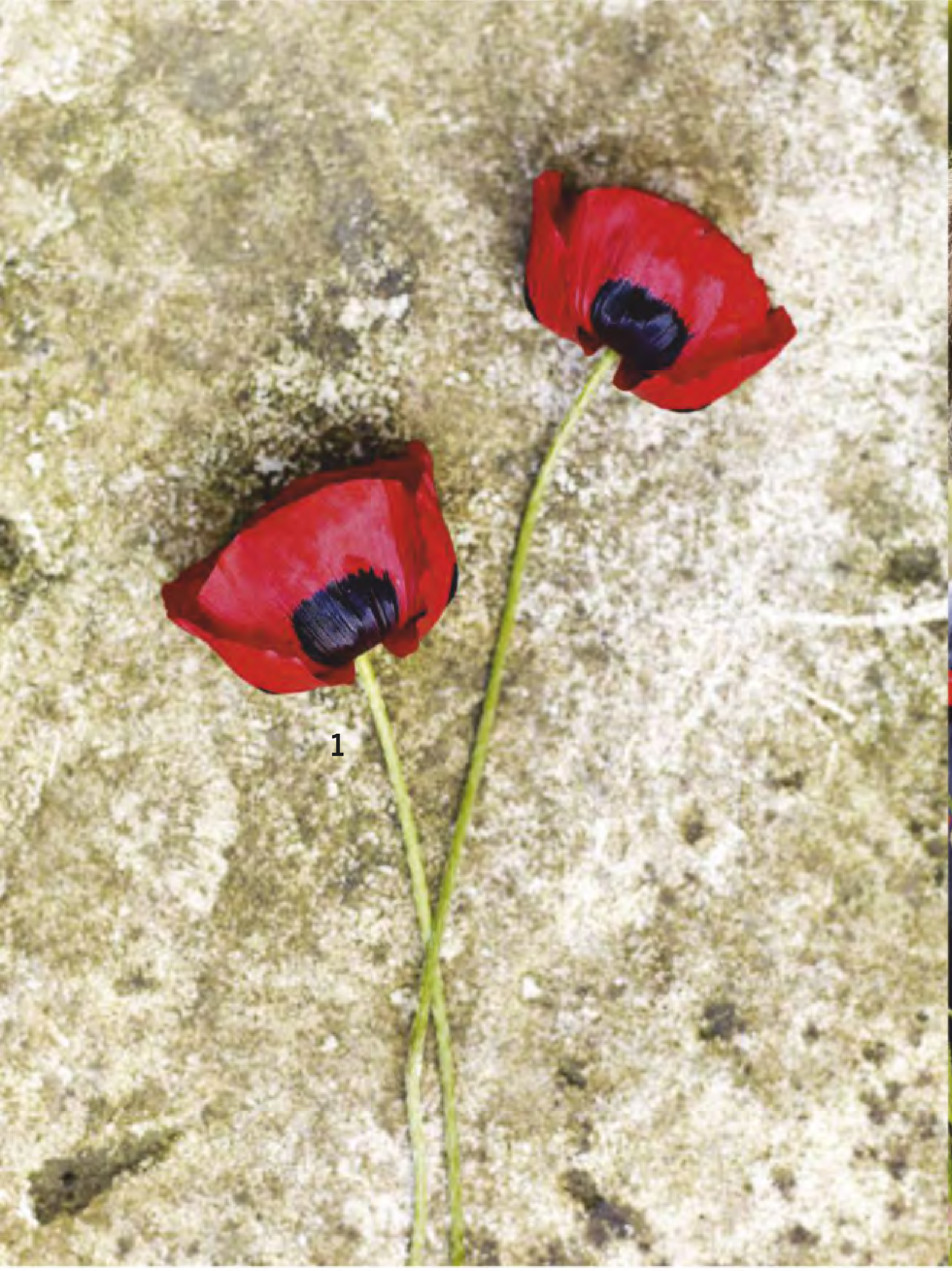
In the winter I put my agaves into a cool greenhouse and don't water them until spring. However, they do like to go outside in late spring and will respond to the higher UV levels with better-coloured foliage and spines, but do beware of killer cold, wet weather.

These Victorian urns are made from heavy cast iron, and I really like the way the blue-green colour marries with the glaucous leaves of the agaves. Agaves have a contemporary air and make an interesting combination with the classically styled urns.

Plants

1 *Agave parrasana*
Known as the cabbage head agave, this is a slow-growing agave that eventually reaches a diameter of around 60cm. It comes from the mountain slopes of Mexico and is found between elevations of 1,000m and 3,000m. 60cm. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 8b-10b.

2 *Agave montana*
The mountain agave is one of the most hardy agaves. It hails from the mountains of northeastern Mexico (at altitudes to 3,000m) where it can grow up to 1m in diameter. 1.3m. RHS H4, USDA 7b-10b.



OLD FLAMES

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

I like to think I rescued this handsome, rectangular oak box from being swallowed up by an advancing sea of blackthorn. It's one of several trough boxes I discovered languishing by a friend's hedge, and I'd coveted them for quite a while before I finally asked my friend if I could sell them on his behalf. That was six years ago. Fortunately, I have yet to find a buyer and have been looking after them ever since. Over the years the oak has mellowed to a soft woody-grey and spots of lichen have started to appear, giving them a comfortable, aged look that makes it easier to position them in the garden. I have planted this one with *Papaver commutatum* and mulched with picked lavender flowers to hide the dark soil.

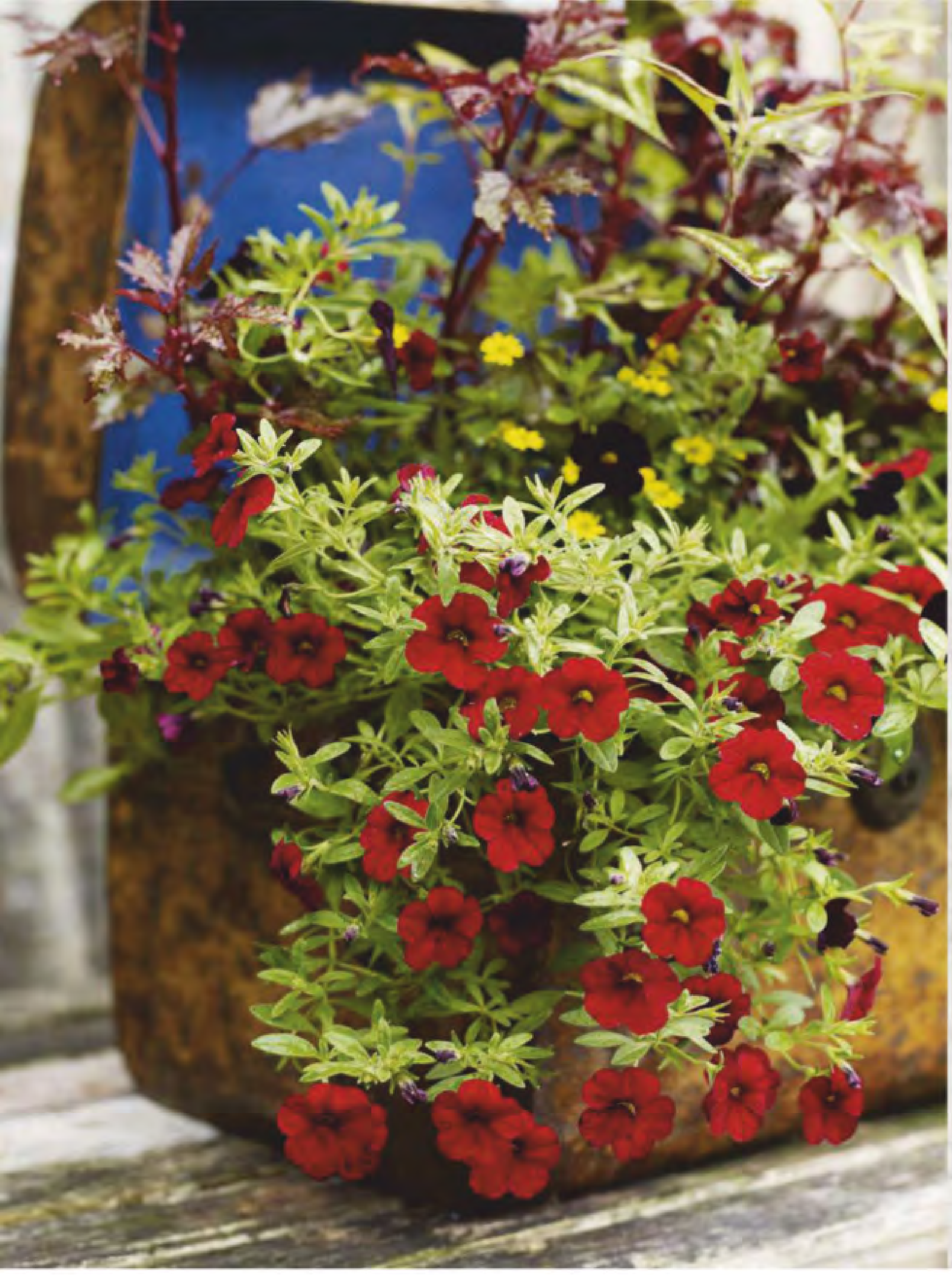
How to achieve the look

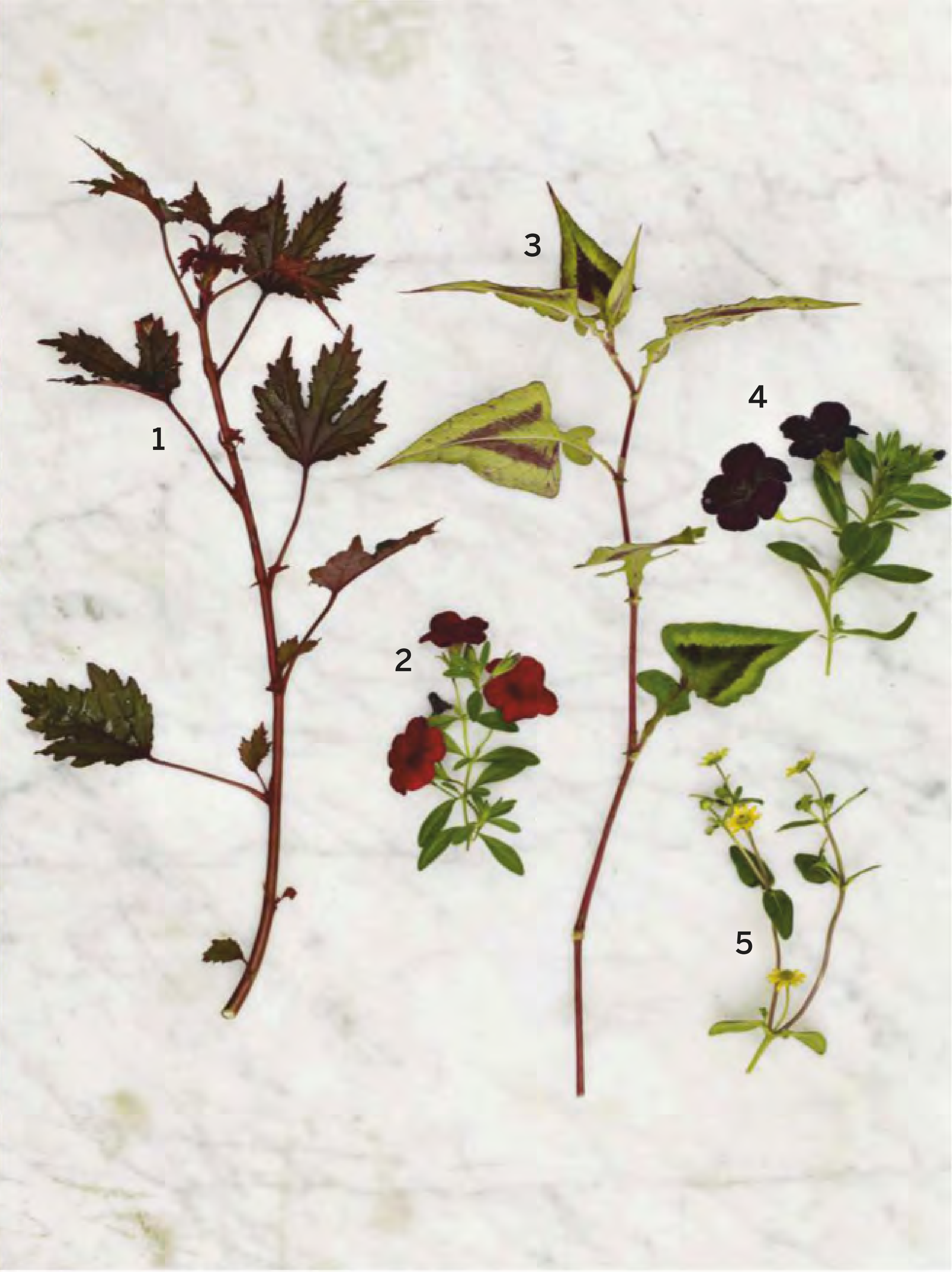
Even though the flowers of *Papaver commutatum* last only a few days at most, they are produced in such profusion that these poppies earn their keep for more than six weeks. I sow them in the autumn and hold them as rosettes in a cold frame. The key is not to let them get too wet during the winter. I plant them out in late March, spacing them every 20cm in a loam-based compost with added coarse grit to encourage good drainage. When planting I take extra care because the seedlings are quite fragile and can snap clean off at soil level if not handled gently enough. But once established, all they really need is regular watering and some support by way of a few small pea sticks.

The box, one of several similar-sized troughs, has been hewn out of rough, sawn oak and then joined with wooden pegs. They are basically rustic window boxes with two feet on the base that hold the body off the ground. They are lined with a zinc planting box, which separates the wet compost from the oak, helping to stop it from rotting. In the past we have used them atop a wall, but I have positioned this one on a gravel path next to a flower bed.

Plant

1 ***Papaver commutatum***
A hardy annual poppy that can self-sow. June – August. 40cm. AGM. RHS H5.





HEAT OF THE MOMENT

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

When I found this tarnished old chest, I knew it would make the perfect house-warming gift for a friend who had just moved and had other things to think about ahead of furnishing her south-facing balcony. I love the container for its shape and colour and knew it was right when I discovered the ultramarine colour inside of the lid. Naturally, the plant selection has to have an exotic feel, radiate summer and heat, and thrive in bright sunlight.

How to achieve the look

A deep, metal container lends itself well to planting as it can accommodate a generous quantity of compost and a decent layer of drainage. As this container was for a gift, I wanted it to be light, so I covered the drainage holes with crocks and filled a third of the planter with hydroleca, a useful aggregate used in horticulture for drainage. I used a good-quality, multi-purpose compost with added slow-release fertiliser to give the plants sufficient nutrients for the first few weeks.

Persicaria runcinata 'Purple Fantasy' is the star of this arrangement. I love its leaves and it develops small, white flowers in late summer. *Hibiscus* 'Mahogany Splendor' picks up the colour of the markings on the leaves of *Persicaria*, but its deeply lobed, serrated outline contrasts with their shape. Both *Calibrachoa* and *Sanvitalia* are reliable performers and will flower all summer long. I use stronger plants as support, and weave them through the display for effect. These plants are generally not frost tolerant, so keep them in a sheltered position or cover them with horticultural fleece or any light fabric overnight until the danger of frost has passed. If you tease some shoots of *Persicaria* and *Hibiscus* through the other plants, and vice versa, to slightly control their growth, and feed weekly with liquid food, you will create a stunning display.

Plants

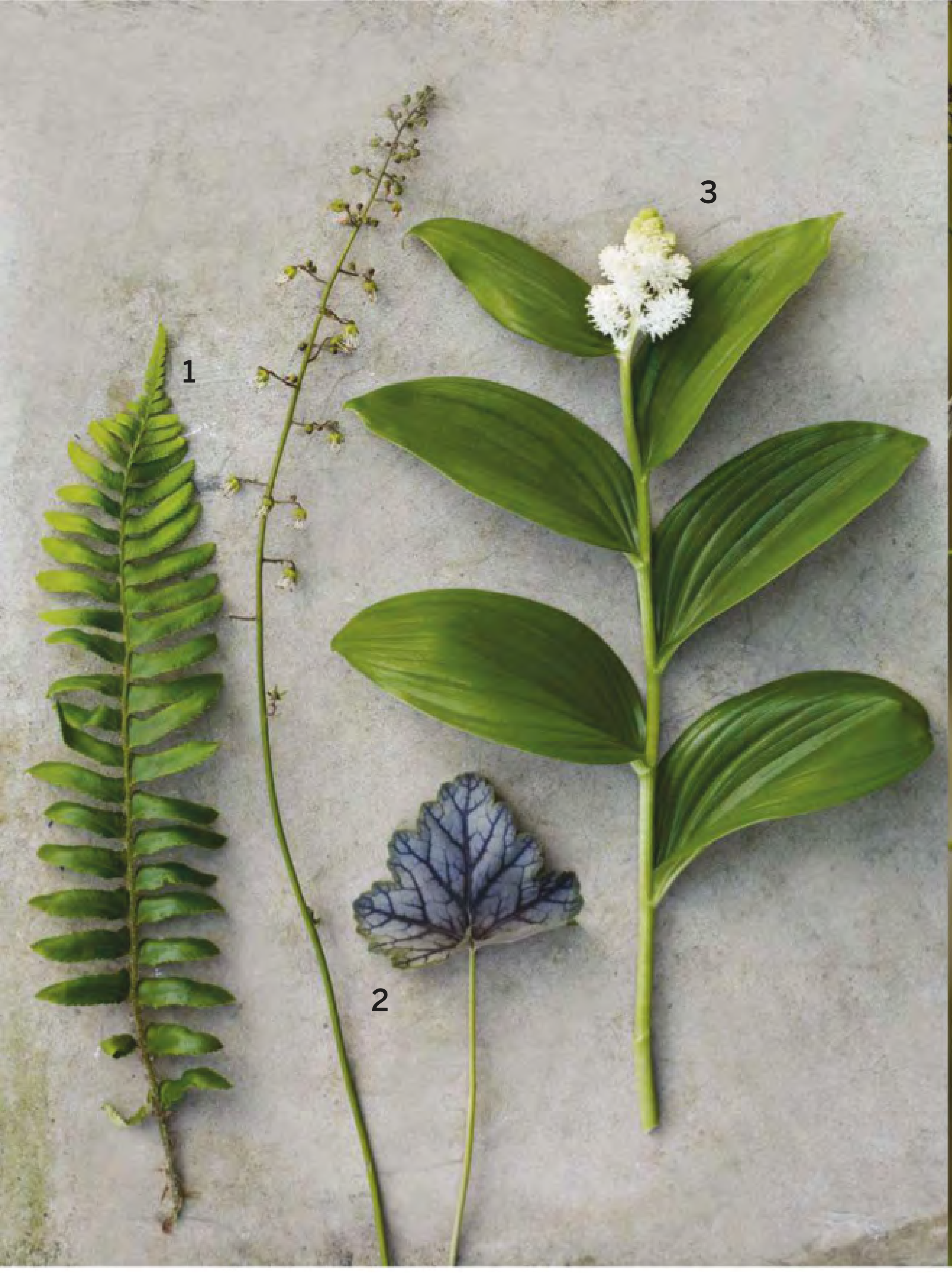
1 *Hibiscus* 'Mahogany Splendor'
A versatile foliage plant that is also fantastic for flower arrangements. The leaves are darker in direct sun, but it also grows well in semi-shade. Hardy in mild climes. 75cm. USDA 8a-11.

2 *Calibrachoa* Superbells Red (= 'Uscali28')
Flowers freely all summer; no need to deadhead. Blood-red flowers. May – October. 45cm.

3 *Persicaria runcinata* 'Purple Fantasy'
Small, white pompom flowers from August onwards. Hardy in mild areas. Spreads slowly from rhizomes. August – September. 50cm. RHS H5.

4 *Calibrachoa* Can-can Black Cherry
A darker-red form of Superbells Red, above. May – October. 45cm.

5 *Sanvitalia* 'Inca'
Golden-yellow flowers with healthy, dark-green leaves. May – October. 10-20cm.



SHADY COMPANIONS

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

Just outside my bathroom window sits one of my most important pots. This is the first pot I see in the morning and the last one I look at in the evening. In May, I concentrate on just three plants for this pot to last well into the autumn. A recent visit to landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx's garden near Rio de Janeiro inspired me to choose strong foliage and a pot full of character such as this one, which I discovered in an antiques centre.

How to achieve the look

A shady position with a dark, lichen-patterned background provides a great opportunity to play with texture. *Heuchera* are available in many sizes and colours and I have chosen 'Silver Scrolls' for its predominant silver on a burgundy background, mirrored in the colour of the pot. Its dainty flowers seem to hover above the leaves and sway gently with the slightest movement of air. The sword fern *Polystichum munitum* will ultimately grow into a large plant, but until then it is useful for anchoring the *Maianthemum racemosum* with its creamy-white flowers. The flowers of both the *Heuchera* and *Maianthemum* will fade within a few weeks, but the display is still a reminder of that happy afternoon in Brazil.

I drilled three holes in the pot and filled a third of it with grit to provide enough drainage. Being located in the shade, the plants will need less moisture, and overwatering could be a danger. Well-rotted leaf mould mixed with multi-purpose compost is a good choice of material for filling the rest of the pot, but a good-quality, ready-mixed growing medium should suffice.

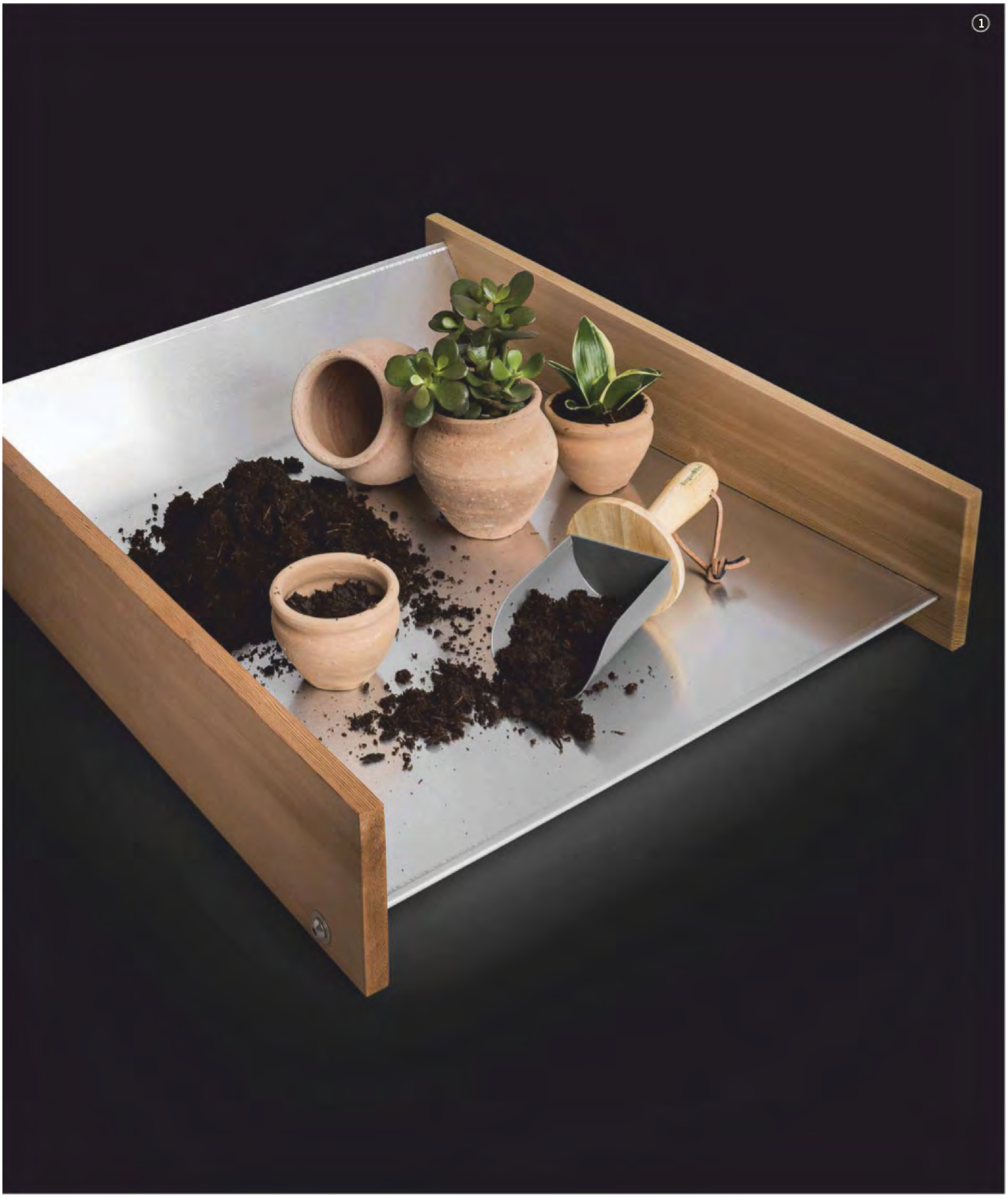
Cut the spent flower stalks off the *Heuchera*, but leave the *Maianthemum* as the flowers will develop into attractive red berries. A weekly dose of liquid fertiliser will keep the plants growing well, but there is a chance of vine weevil infestation. Vine weevil larvae will eat notches out of the leaves, but a treatment with nematodes will help break their life cycle.

Plants

1 *Polystichum munitum*
Tall, deep-green fronds all year round. Trim off old leaves as they turn brown. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
2 *Heuchera* 'Silver Scrolls'
A low, clump-forming, semi-evergreen cultivar that keeps its leaves through the winter. Sun or partial shade in well-drained soil. Leaves 45cm, flowers 60cm in May. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
3 *Maianthemum racemosum*
A favourite for full or partial shade, with white flowers later developing into red berries. Good autumn colour; spreads by rhizomes. May – June. 75cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

KITTED OUT

For planting up and maintaining your pots and containers



COMPILED BY NIKI GOSS; MAIN IMAGE (THIS PAGE AND PAGE 47) BY STEVE SAYERS

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1. Cedar and Aluminium Potting Tray, W56.5cm x D67.5cm, £85, Gabriel Ash, gabrielash.com; **Barni Terracotta Honey Pots**, small H7cm x D9cm, large H11cm x D11cm, £6-9, Rowen & Wren, 01276 451077, rowenandwren.co.uk; **RHS Endorsed Compost Scoop**, stainless steel, £13.99, Burgon & Ball, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com **2. Plant and Grill Table**, galvanised steel, H90.5cm x W117cm x D40cm, £249, Manufactum, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk **3. Hydro Wine Watering System**, pack of 4, €14.95, Bio Green, biogreen.world/en **4. Anti Slug Copper Strip**, 4m, £14.80, Manufactum, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk **5. Hydroleca Water Holding Clay Pebbles**, 10 litres, £11.75, Vitax, 01530 510060, gardenworld.co.uk **6. Pot Brushes**, small £5.50, large £6.50, Hibbitt of Oswestry, 01691 656152, hibbitt.co.uk **7. Okatsune Pro Snips**, £36, Niwaki, 01747 445059, niwaki.com **8. Steel Garden Plant Caddy**, £48, Manufactum, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk **9. Insulated Plant Pot Cover with velcro fastening**, H50cm x D45cm, €22.95, Bio Green, biogreen.world/en

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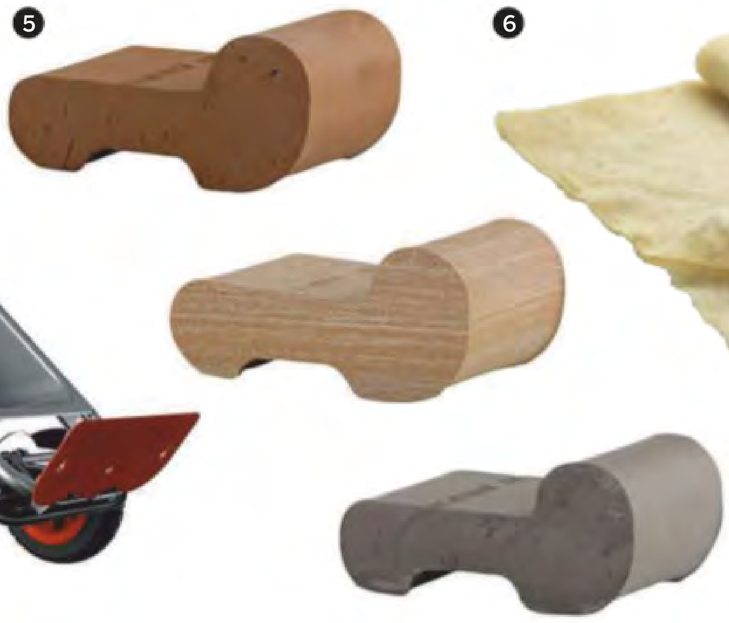

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1. Wool Compost, 30 litres, £10.99, Dalefoot Composts, 01931 713281, dalefootcomposts.co.uk **2. Lead Effect Pot Feet**, pack of 4, £3.75, Crocus, 01344 578111, crocus.co.uk **3. Darlac Ergo Snips**, £8.99, MacKay, 01223 517000, mackay.co.uk **4. Aerocart All Purpose Lifter/Carrier**, £149.99, WORX, worx.com/en **5. Deroma Pot Feet**, pack of 3, from top: terracotta £1.99, liscio white £2.99, liscio grafite £2.99, all Crocus, 01344 578111, crocus.co.uk **6. Sheep's Wool Frost Protection Fleece**, 1m x 2m, £9, Manufactum, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk **7. Right- or Left-Handed Potting Trowel**, ash wood handle €40.15, cherry wood handle €44.50, Sneeboer, sneeboer.com/en **8. Barrington Plant Stand**, steel, H78cm x W77cm x D34.5cm, £95, Garden Trading, 01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk **9. YoYo Technopolymer Self Extending Hosepipe**, 30m, £38, B&Q, 0333 014 3098, diy.com

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TIPS FOR PLANTING IN CONTAINERS

Container gardening is a versatile way to brighten up any space, but potted plants need a bit of care and forethought to look their best

COMPILED BY **ALYS HURN**

- **Filling the bottom few centimetres of the container with crocks** or grit helps with drainage, and reduces the amount of compost needed as well as the overall weight of the pot.

- **Plants grown in containers rely entirely on you the gardener for food** and water so invest in a good potting compost, see our potting compost guide on page 111 for recommendations, and make sure that you feed plants regularly throughout the summer months. Flowering plants should be fed once a week with a liquid fertiliser during their flowering period.

- **To help improve water retention in your pot,** add water-retaining crystals to the compost. Soil in containers will dry out much more quickly than in the garden and the crystals will help store water.

- **Mulch your pots to help retain moisture.** Options vary from decorative pebbles and bark chippings, to leaf mould and horticultural grit.

- **If you buy terracotta pots, buy the best you can afford.** Cheap terracotta pots will flake or crack during hard frosts.

- **Plants grown in containers are under more stress** than those in the garden and are therefore more susceptible to pests and disease. Treat plants regularly for aphids, vine weevils, slugs and mildew. Check for overwintering pests too, particularly vine weevil larvae, as the grubs will eat away at plant roots.

- **Don't skimp on the size of your container.** Most plants look better in big groups in large pots, and larger pots retain water better than small ones.

- **Once filled with soil, planted and watered, your containers will be heavy,** so position them first where you want them to end up or invest in a pot roller to help you move them around.

- **Try to hold back on the number of plants** you use when planting up a container for the first time. The arrangement may look skimpy to begin with, but the plants will soon grow and spread to fill out your pot.

- **Using a rose attachment on your watering can** will distribute the water more effectively, and is kinder to young foliage and flowers. It will also prevent soil movement.

- **Plants in pots and containers need** considerably more water than those in the garden. In really hot weather, you will need to water them at least once a day.

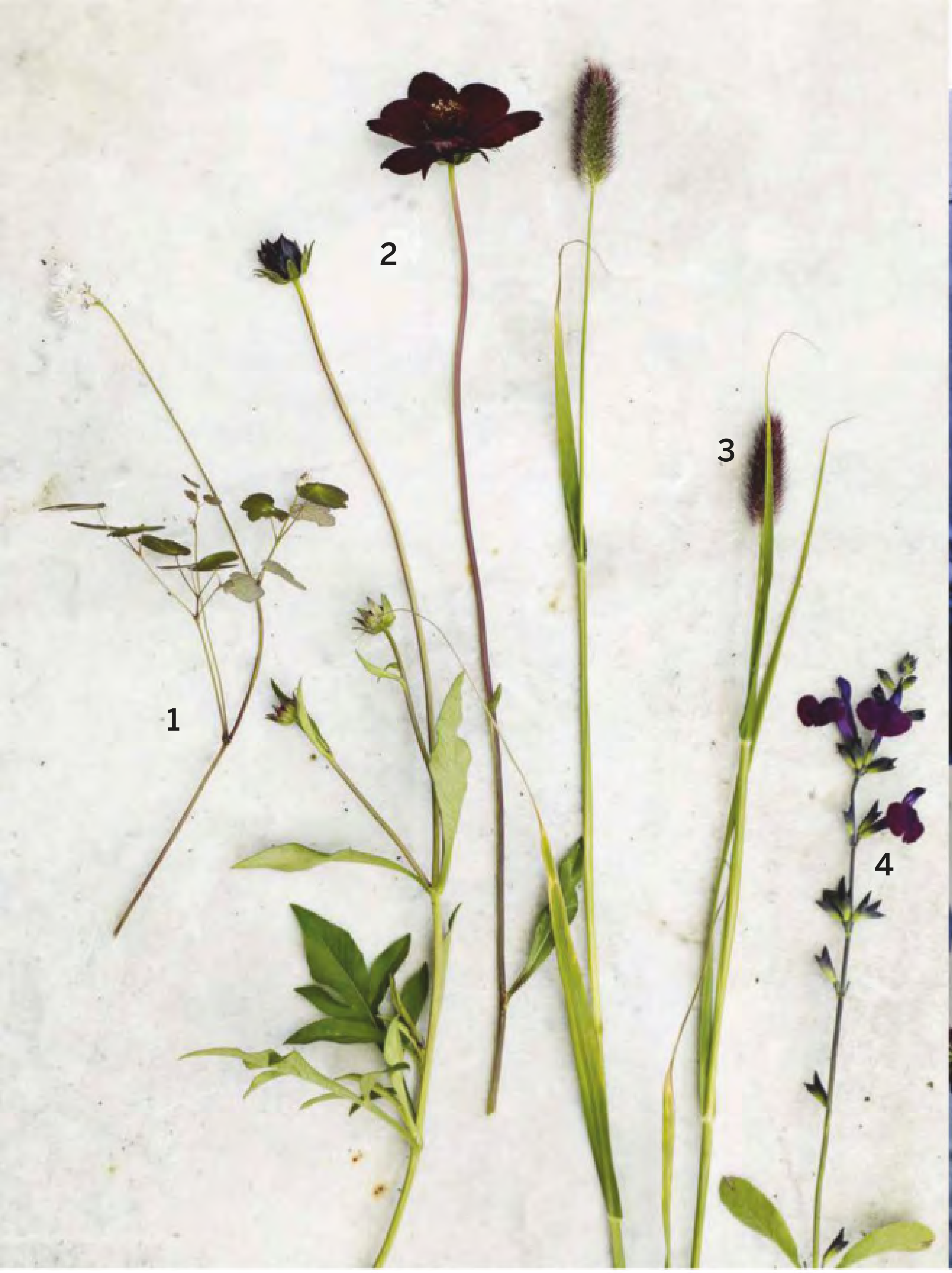
- **Keeping your pots and tools clean** will help prevent a build-up of pests and diseases. Brush pots out thoroughly after use, wash with warm soapy water, and dry before storing.

- **Be careful not to over-pot when repotting.** Only repot to a container one size larger than the previous size. Over-potting will result in too much sodden compost for the size of the root ball and could risk the plant becoming anaerobic, causing the yellowing of leaves and root damage.

- **If you're going on holiday** and can't rely on neighbours to look after your plants while you're away, move your containers to a shady spot and group them together. Water well before you leave, and if the weather is really dry, consider putting the containers in a tub of water.

SUMMER

Longer, warmer days allow for more time to be spent in the garden. Plants are sun-loving and rich in colour, and scent comes into play. The height of plants becomes more dramatic and playful grasses can be added to introduce texture and form into long-flowering displays.



CHOCOLATE BUNNIES

WORDS JACKY MILLS

Chocolate cosmos is one of the stars of summer. Its deep velvety brown flowers, which slowly fade to a dusky red, enrich any planting scheme, and the faint scent of chocolate cake wafting on warm, sunny days is an added bonus. I've combined it here with a dark-purple salvia and the beautifully soft, tactile seedheads of a pennisetum, tipped white like a rabbit's tail. For a bit of sparkle, I've added some young thalictrum plants at the base.

How to achieve the look

I wove this basket out of brown willow several years ago. It will deteriorate if left out all year, so I used a large plastic pot that fitted neatly inside and planted everything up in that. A rattan cane basket would work just as well, but remember to line it with weed-suppressant membrane, which will keep the compost in place while allowing excess moisture to escape.

This compact cosmos has an especially strong scent. Treat it like a dahlia, cutting back the foliage in winter and storing the dormant tubers away from frost. Bought as small plants, the Chinese thalictrums will eventually get much taller. I decided to enjoy their beautiful leaf shapes and fluffy white flowers in a container before planting them in the border. Pennisetums are not always hardy so treat them as annuals or lift and overwinter under glass. *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Little Bunny', a miniature version of 'Hameln' with pink-tinged, foxtail flowers, is another cultivar to try. *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder' is a bushy salvia with single, sumptuous, hooded, purple flowers. Plant it out in late May and keep deadheading to encourage flowers throughout the summer. It can survive low temperatures in winter if mulched and not overwatered. Salvias take easily from cuttings, producing good-sized plants in a year. They prefer moist, well-drained soil in full sun.

Plants

1 *Thalictrum yunnanense*
Clump-forming perennial with lobed leaves and pink flower buds opening to white. July – September. 60cm.
2 *Cosmos atrosanguineus* Chocamocha (= 'Thomocha')
Tender perennial; deadhead regularly to maintain a constant supply of daisy-like, dark-chocolate flowers. July – October. 65cm.
3 *Pennisetum massaicum* 'Red Bunny Tails'
A clump-forming, deciduous ornamental grass, not reliably hardy. Fluffy red flowers fade to buff in autumn. July – October. 60cm.
4 *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder'
A shrubby perennial with velvety, hooded, deep-purple flowers. Attractive to pollinators. June – October. 75cm. AGM*. RHS H5†.

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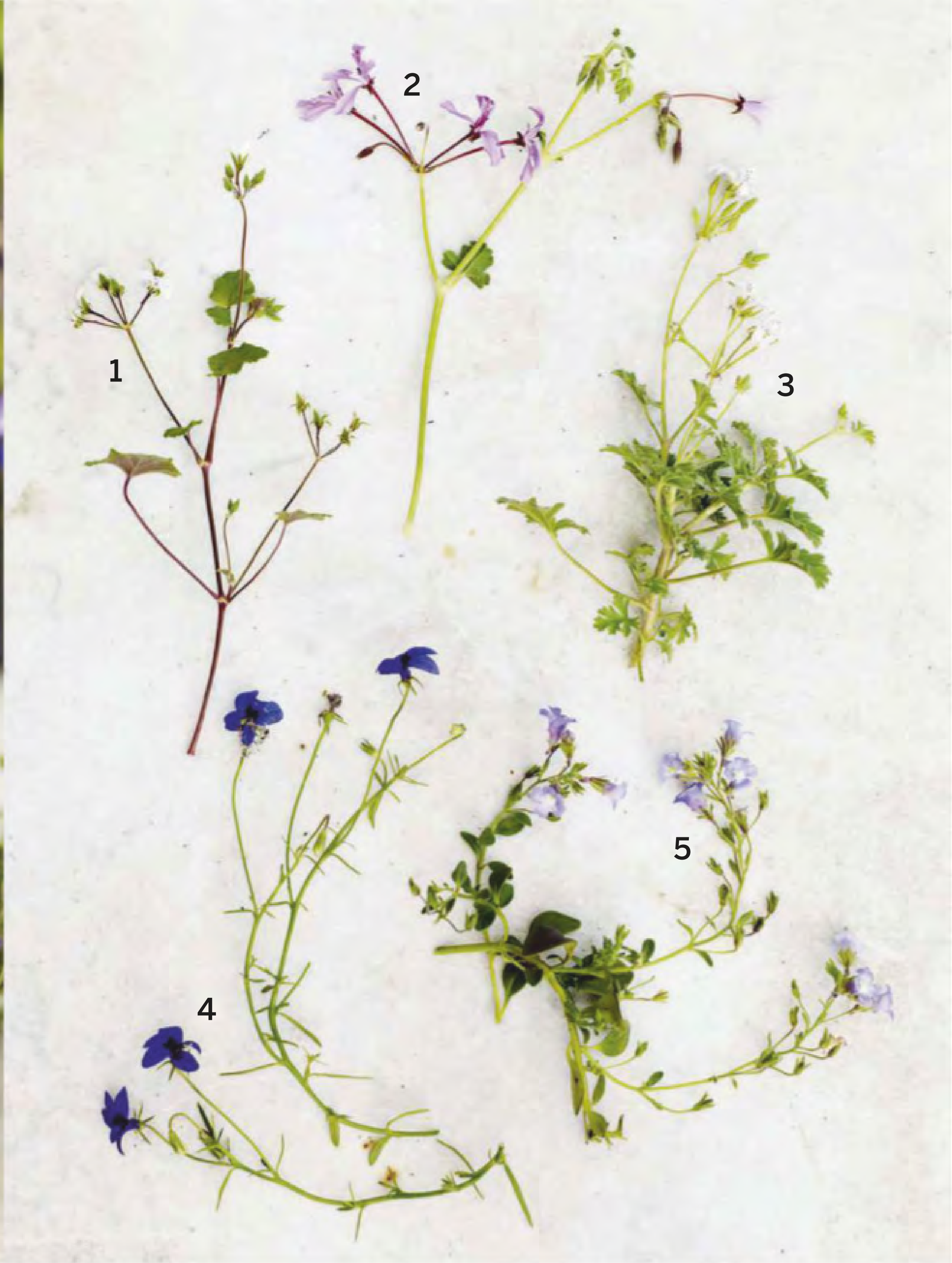
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



PERFECT PELARGONIUMS

WORDS JACKY MILLS

My interest in scented-leaved pelargoniums began while looking after a client's collection. I discovered lots of new plants perfect for containers and have been experimenting ever since. One of my favourites is *Pelargonium* 'Brilliantine', with its dainty, pink flowers held aloft above neat, glaucous foliage that smells of eau de cologne. It works well as a specimen plant grouped with other individuals or in a mixed container. But be warned, pelargoniums are addictive.

How to achieve the look

Here I've made a display combining three different pelargoniums with two other plants with similar growing habits. I've used some ceramic pots I bought at the Chelsea Flower Show to unite them as a collection of loose, trailing plants. These small planters with their distressed glaze come in a range of soft pastel colours that enhance the mounds of delicate flowers. Plain terracotta pots could be used instead, coated with several layers of chalky paint in a favourite pastel hue.

Scented-leaved pelargoniums are tender perennials that need to be kept frost free in winter. They like a sheltered spot in full sun and require well-drained, loam-based compost, which I've finished off with a top dressing of grit. They respond well to a fortnightly high-potash feed and regular deadheading, and are easy to propagate from cuttings.

I've chosen some of the more delicate cultivars with smaller leaves and a profusion of flowers. One of my current favourites is *Pelargonium* 'Brilliantine', with its dainty, bright-pink flowers held in neat sprays above glaucous foliage. It works equally well as a specimen plant grouped with other individuals or in a mixed container. It's shown here as part of a larger display with two other favourite pelargoniums, and partnered with a lovely alpine snapdragon and the blue-flowered *Monopsis*.

Plants

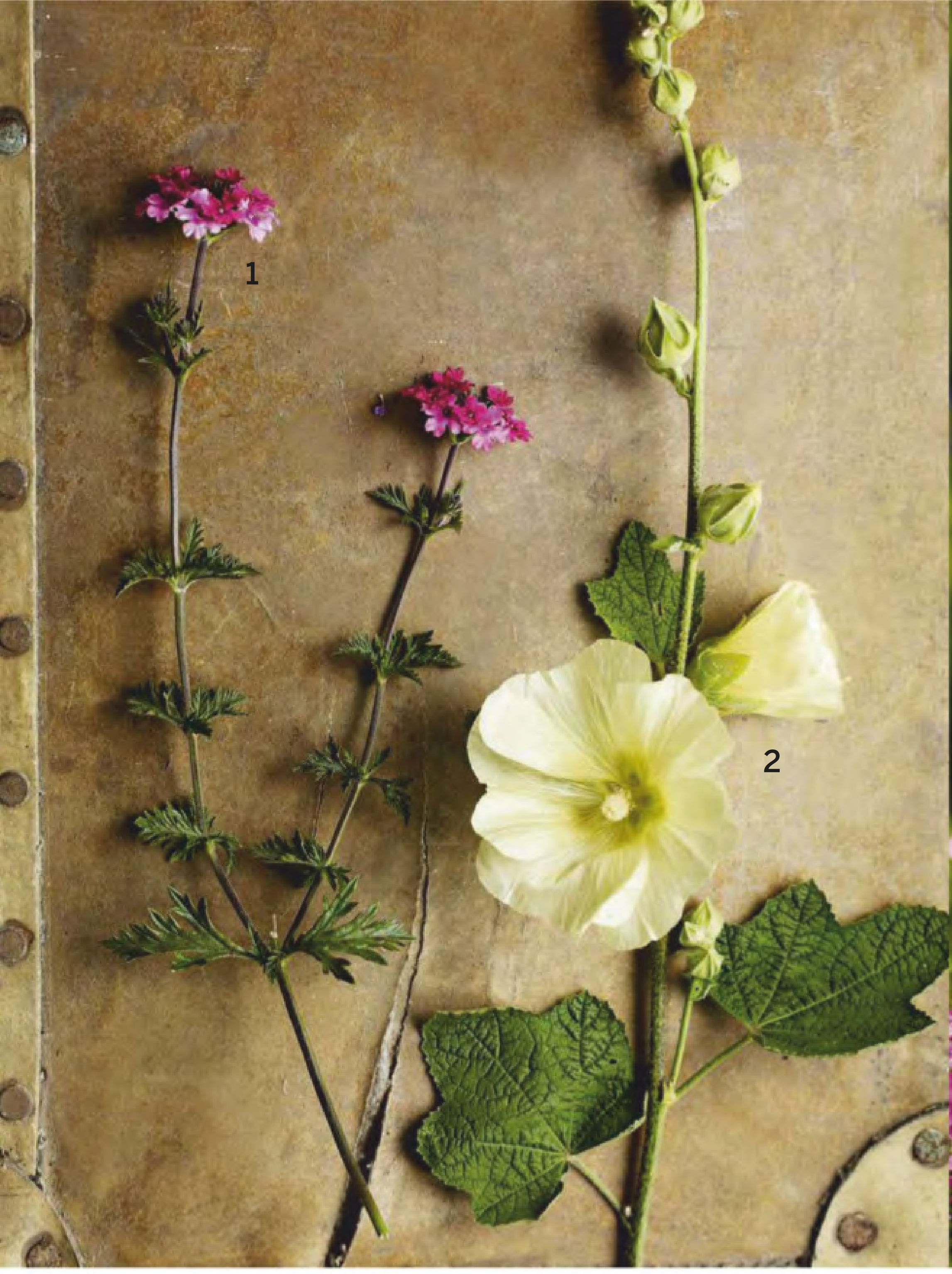
1 *Pelargonium australe*
A prostrate form with masses of tiny, white flowers and two-tone leaves. April – October. 50cm.

2 *Pelargonium* 'Brilliantine'
Small, pink flowers above scented, grey-green, crimped leaves. April – October. 30cm.

3 *Pelargonium* 'Ardwick Cinnamon'
Velvet-grey filigree leaves with a constant supply of small, white flowers. April – October. 30cm.

4 *Monopsis debilis* Midnight (= 'Yagemon')
A South African bedding plant with trailing, deep-blue flowers. June – October. 30cm.

5 *Chaenorhinum origanifolium* 'Blue Dream'
A dwarf snapdragon with violet flowers, requiring well-drained soil in full sun. June – August. 30cm.



GENEROUS WELCOME

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

This bronze urn is one of several given to Sissinghurst's creator, Vita Sackville-West, by her mother in 1932. It once stood in the Parc de Bagatelle in Paris and deserves to be main star of this display. I've filled it with a single plant, *Glandularia* 'Sissinghurst', but surrounded it with complementary plants allowed to self-seed. No gardener could ever plant with the grace with which plants group themselves and it's often more useful to get the atmosphere of a container right rather than stick rigidly to a prescribed planting plan.

How to achieve the look

Despite the flamboyance of the bronze vase, I didn't want it to make a grand announcement, but rather provide an unpretentious and generous welcome. Just as I love seeing fallen petals beneath a flower arrangement, I wanted the same feeling here. To achieve this, I restricted planting within the vase to the rich-pink verbena, *Glandularia* 'Sissinghurst', an old cultivar that was given to the gardeners here at Sissinghurst in the mid-1970s and later named after the garden, but I've also encouraged the self-seeding of both *Alcea rugosa* and *Erigeron karvinskianus* beneath and around the urn.

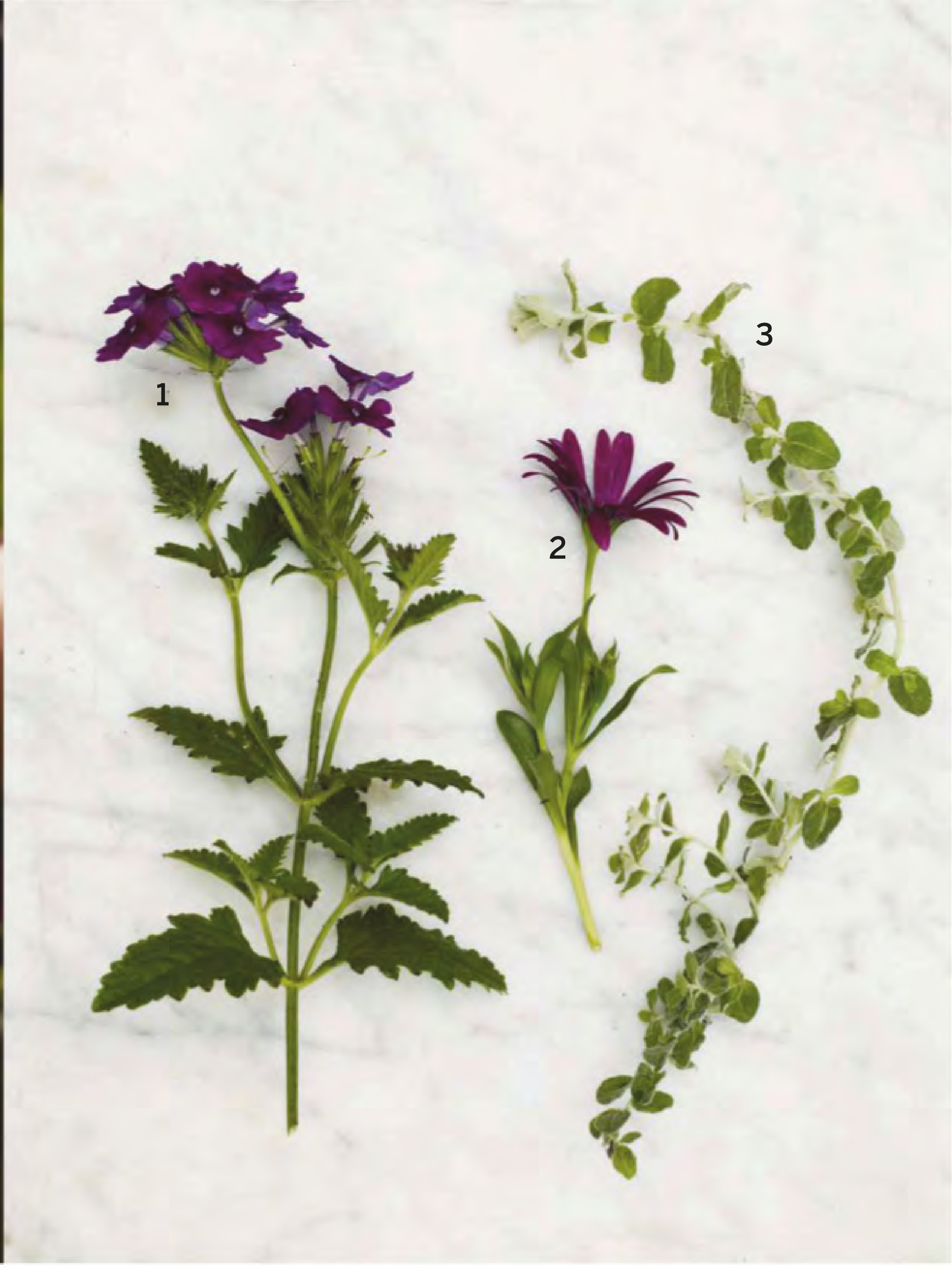
Every year, the verbena delights visitors with its fantastic lightly scrambling shoots, each topped with pink flowers. I have previously planted it in terracotta pots in tandem with the violet-blue *Heliotropium arborescens* 'Princess Marina', a wonderful combination that provides colour and great scent throughout the whole summer.

Here the colour is cooled by the hollyhock, *Alcea rugosa.* Although they are short-lived, hollyhocks freely self-seed if spent flower spikes are left in place, and can establish colonies in the garden that persist for years. I find these self-sown seedlings far preferable to those planted in a border as the sparseness of the foliage around them means they're less susceptible to rust. This pale-yellow-flowered species, with figleaf-shaped foliage, is a longer-lived perennial and less prone to rust.

Plants

1 *Glandularia* 'Sissinghurst'
Not hardy so should be overwintered under glass and cuttings taken to ensure vigorous plants the following season. May – November. 20cm. AGM. RHS H3.
2 *Alcea rugosa*
Single, pale-yellow flowers from late spring to midsummer. Cut back after the first flowers are almost spent to encourage new flower spikes. Deadheading after blooming will encourage plants to live longer. July – August. 1.5m. USDA 4a-8b.

For details of *Erigeron karvinskianus* shown left, but not above, see page 61.



SUN WORSHIPPER

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

I found this beautiful old copper planter on eBay. Its shape is perfect for the terrace on which it sits – where in summer it is in the sun for most of the day. In summer, the planting should be rich and strong, so I can enjoy it from the house too; later it can be used for bulbs. Sticking to a very limited palette of colour will give it greater impact and will also make it easier to arrange with other pots.

How to achieve the look

Aged copper is a wonderful material and has the added advantage of going with almost any colour. Here I play with purples and grey, finding the grey of *Plecostachys serpyllifolia* especially useful for picking up the shades of the planter. *Osteospermum* comes in several colours, but for me 'Nairobi Purple' is one of the best for its simplicity and intensity.

To add a little more depth, I've carefully woven a pinkish verbena called *Glandularia* Superbena Burgundy (= 'Usbena15') through the *Osteospermum.* The verbena's leaves are a good contrast in shape and texture and so are the flowers; the colour of the flowers, however, is close to that of the *Osteospermum* flowers, keeping the combination calm and effective.

Old copper pots are one of my favourite types of container, and are highly sought after, but when choosing a pot make sure it's one that will sit securely on the ground. Pots with a small base or a long, thin shape will dry out more quickly and might become unstable once plants start to grow.

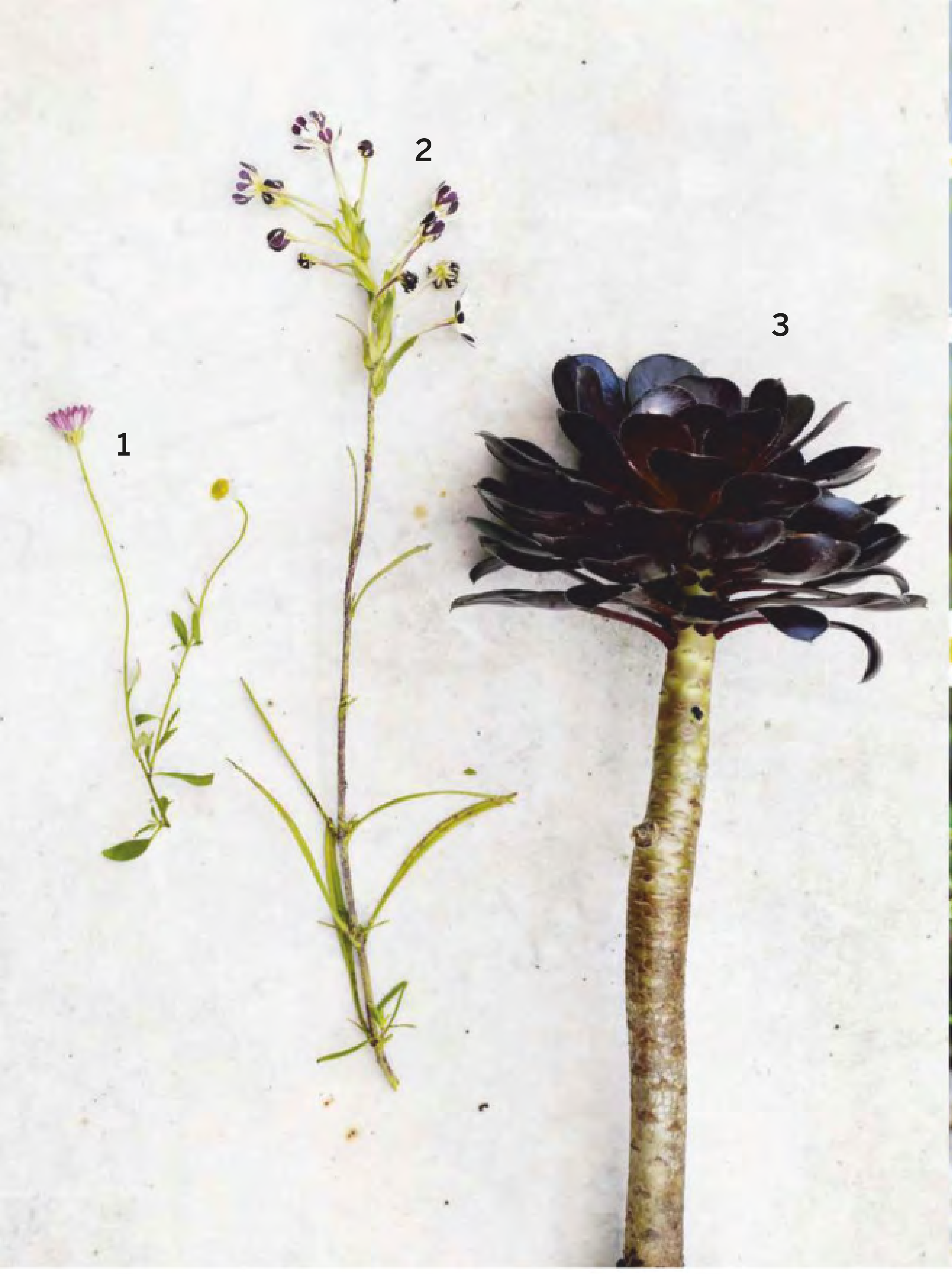
Drainage is important and I am always generous with drilling holes and covering them with crocks and a layer of grit. Good, multi-purpose compost, mixed in equal parts with John Innes No.2, is great, but a multi-purpose compost alone would work too. The combination relies on deadheading and on weaving shoots through the stems of their neighbours. The *Osteospermum* is the star so keep the other plants under control by cutting off vigorous shoots.

Plants

1 *Glandularia* Superbena Burgundy (= 'Usbena15')
A great bedding plant for full sun or partial shade. It does not flower well if grown too dry. Deadheading will keep it looking tidy. May – October. 30cm.

2 *Osteospermum* 'Nairobi Purple'
Vibrant colour throughout the summer as long as it is grown in full sun in well-drained compost. May – September. 35cm.

3 *Plecostachys serpyllifolia*
Invaluable foliage plant for pot displays and can easily be controlled by cutting back. 30cm.



MOTH CANDY

WORDS JACKY MILLS

I'm very fond of aeoniums, particularly these intensely dark rosettes held aloft on quirky stems. The colours blend together with the muted tones of the cast iron urn, the white daisies ageing to a soft pink as their green centres fade to yellow. They also complement the magenta buds of the night phlox, whose white-notched flowers are closed during the hottest part of the day. They will open in the evening, exuding a heady vanilla and honey fragrance to attract moths.

How to achieve the look

This late 19th-century urn was a great find at a local flea market. The long, fluted body, with its rusty patination, is quite narrow, so won't accommodate plants with large rootballs.

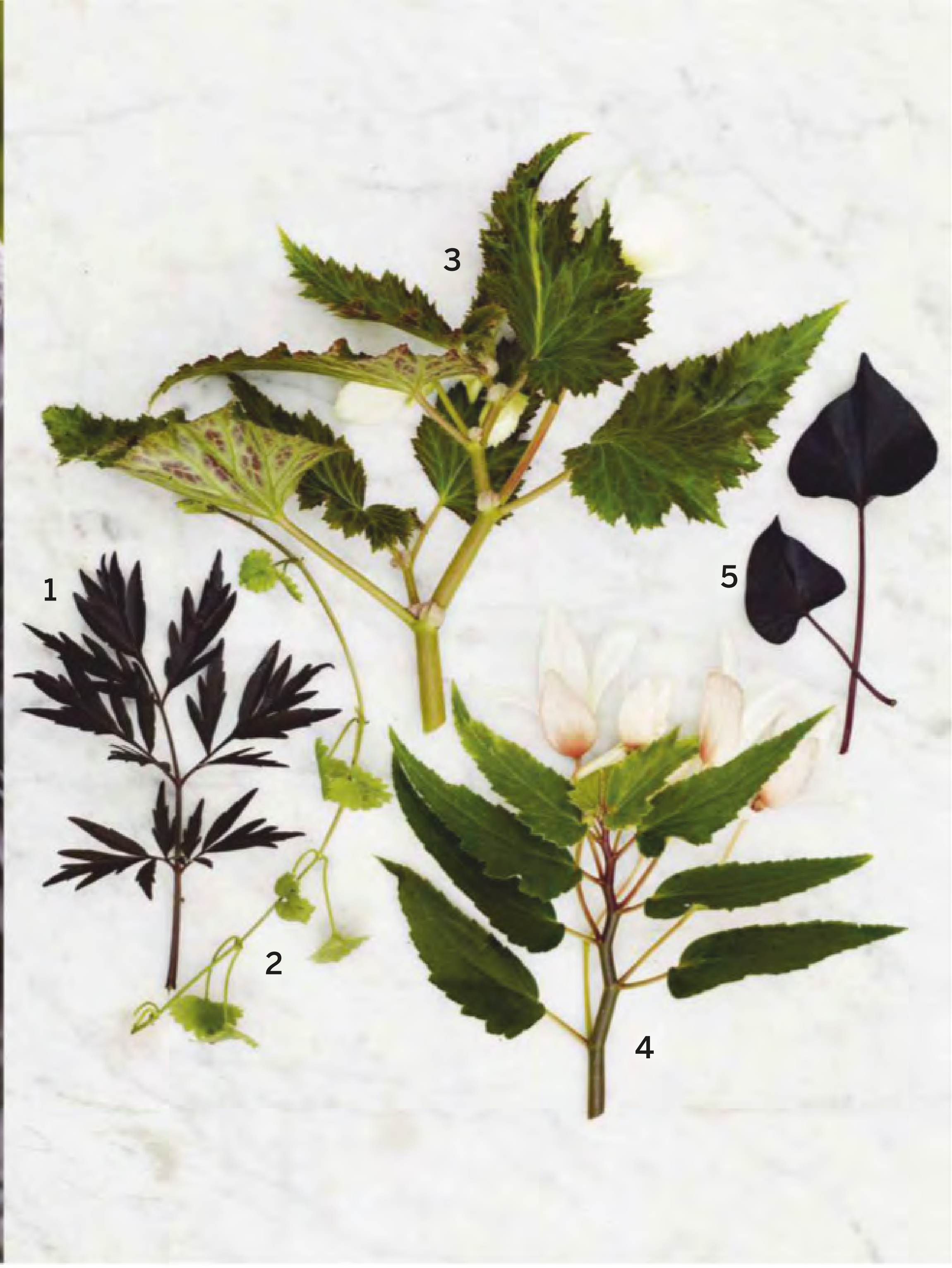
Aeoniums are perfect specimen plants in containers and happily mix with other species that require sun and well-drained conditions. Tall plants can be vulnerable in high winds, so take cuttings when they get too leggy. Cut the stem with a sharp knife and leave the ends to dry up before potting on in gritty compost. Prevent the mahogany whorls of *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' reverting to green in winter by supplying good light levels away from frost and reduce watering. The species *A. arboreum* produces compact green rosettes on branching stems that I've previously teamed up with white *Diascia* or the white *Euphorbia hypericifolia* Diamond Frost (= 'Inneuphe'). *Erigeron karvinskianus* self-seeds easily and is lovely springing up among paving. Seed can be sown directly on to compost indoors from early February or outside from April to July. The night phlox is a South African native, requiring full sun and sharply drained soil. Cut back hard after flowering to encourage repeat blooms. The annual form, *Zaluzianskya capensis* 'Midnight Candy', can be sown in spring. There's also a perennial species, *Z. ovata*.

Plants

1 *Erigeron karvinskianus*
A low-growing, mat-forming, hardy perennial with daisy-like white flowers darkening to pink with age. A prolific self-seeder. June – October. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5.

2 *Zaluzianskya capensis* 'Midnight Candy'
This hardy annual has maroon-backed, white-lobed petals that open in the evening. Highly scented with aromatic foliage. June – August. 30cm.

3 *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop'
An evergreen, subtropical succulent with multiple waxy rosettes borne on a basal stem. It produces racemes of star-shaped, yellow flowers in spring. Year-round interest. 1m. AGM. RHS H1C.



DRAMATIC SIMPLICITY

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

The background for this planter is a long row of grey-leaved hostas and a wall covered in climbing roses. I chose purple-coloured leaves to stand out against the backdrop and white flowers to add interest, without being overpowering. This scheme has to work when you catch a glimpse of it from afar, but still be interesting when you walk right past it, and the chosen plants will provide this until the first frost.

How to achieve the look

There are some places where you don't need much colour to make an impact. In this case, I've used only white, purple and green, but the shape of the leaves and flowers make it an interesting combination. I have chosen two begonias to fill the space between the other plants. Their dark-green leaves give some breathing space between the purples around them and grey leaves below.

This lead planter has a suitably theatrical flourish, but needs care when being handled, as the metal is relatively soft and it is easy to leave marks. I covered its drainage hole with crocks, used some gravel for drainage, and used a mixture of good-quality compost and John Innes No.2 as the growing medium.

Sambucus nigra f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' produces pink flowers in summer and when used in partial shade its leaves are not too dark. *Ipomoea batatas* 'Sweet Caroline Sweetheart Purple' is an invaluable foliage plant and its heart-shaped leaves add some gravitas to the scheme. The two begonias might seem old fashioned, but I think they earn their place. To connect the display to the border, I used *Glechoma hederacea* 'Variegata', but it will need to be contained to keep the urn visible. Deadheading and a weekly liquid feed will ensure a good performance. Additional staking in summer will keep all plants in place and help the begonias reach a good height.

Plants

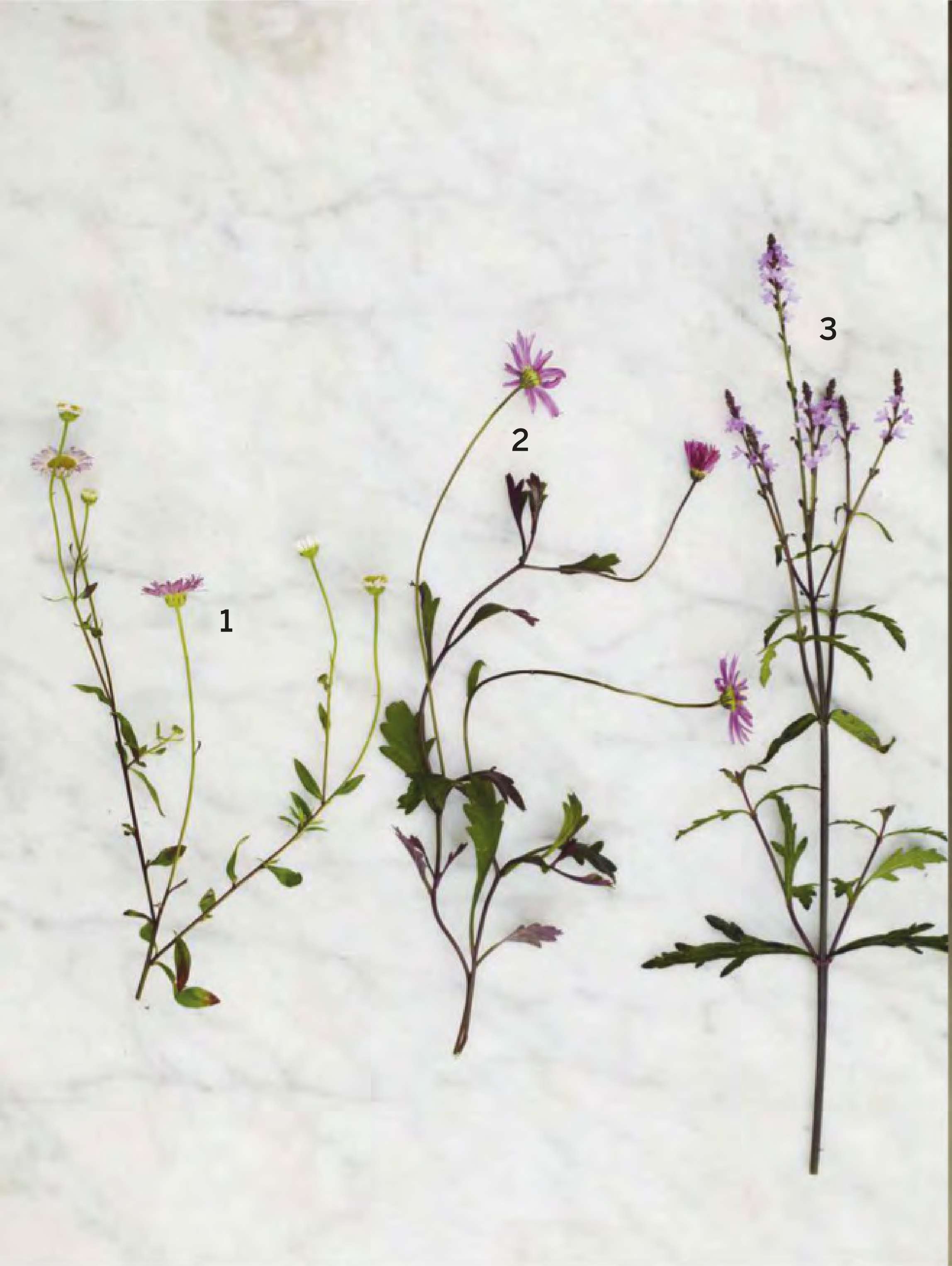
1 *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva'
I cut this back to 10cm in spring to achieve arching stems and keep it short. 6m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

2 *Glechoma hederacea* 'Variegata'
Keep thinning this out to achieve the best effects. 1.5m. USDA 3b-10b.

3 *Begonia* x *tuberhybrida* white flowered
Grown from tubers in early spring; the tubers can be saved for the next season. 50cm. USDA 10a-11.

4 *Begonia boliviensis* 'Bossa Nova Pure White'
Easily grown from seeds or bought in spring as a young plant, it will soon develop into a stunning plant, flowering from May until first frosts. Trailing habit. 40cm. USDA 9b-11.

5 *Ipomoea batatas* 'Sweet Caroline Sweetheart Purple'
Flowers in hot conditions where it produces the darkest leaves. 40cm.



NATURAL FLAIR

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

Simplicity is often the key to a successful scheme. In this case I have chosen three plants that adore full sunshine and flower all summer long. They all have a very natural, simple feel and work well with the utilitarian well bucket. The bucket was a real find in an antiques centre and I love it for the simplicity, colour and the texture of the wood and metalwork. It immediately reminded me of a beautiful old well I found when hiking in Tuscany. It was surrounded by similar plants, and this container will bring back those beautiful memories every time I look at it.

How to achieve the look

Verbena officinalis var. *grandiflora* 'Bampton', a much more compact form of the widely used *Verbena bonariensis*, flowers all summer long on tall racemes. Its purple leaves are similar to those of *Brachyscome* 'Magenta Delight', which links the planting beautifully. I've added *Erigeron karvinskianus* 'Kew Profusion', a sun lover that self-seeds freely in any gaps in paving or walls. Its flowers are similar to the brachyscome, but start off white and develop a pink hue as they mature.

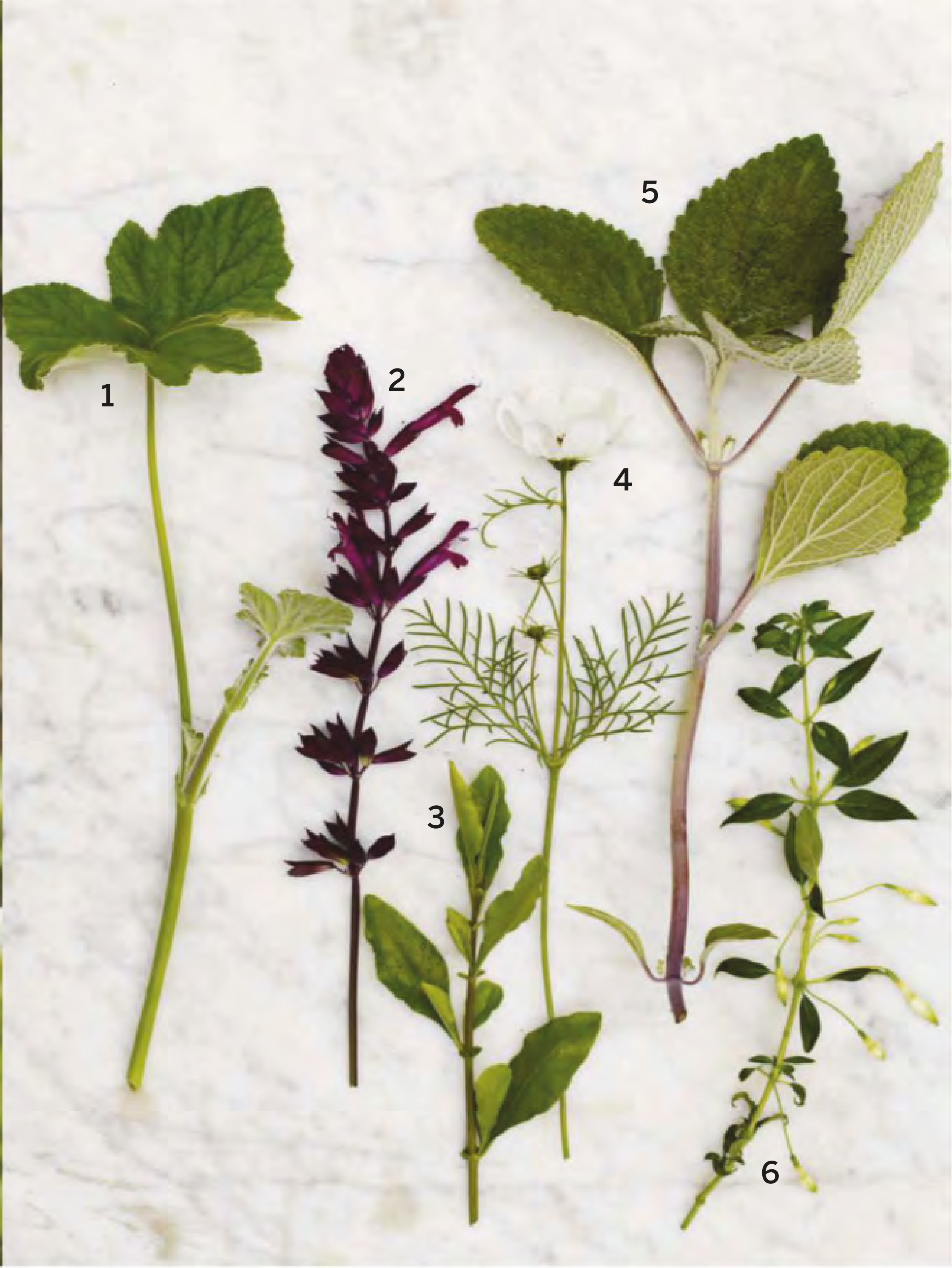
Wooden containers have a warmer feel than terracotta, stone or lead and develop an appealing patina as they age. You can paint them in any colour, but for this combination I prefer the natural look. I drilled three 6mm holes and covered them with crocks and a layer of horticultural grit. In this case I used John Innes No.2 with additional grit for drainage, which will give the plants enough nutrients for the season. You could feed the planter with some liquid fertiliser to achieve lush foliage and growth, but I think this combination will work very well without additional food. Some deadheading would be beneficial to tidy up the plants and prevent excessive self-seeding, but all in all, this is a very low-maintenance combination of plants.

Plants

1 *Erigeron karvinskianus* 'Kew Profusion'
Self-seeds profusely, but easy to control by weeding. Slightly trailing habit, making it perfect for smaller containers and use in dry stone walls. May – October. 40cm. USDA 6a-9b.

2 *Brachyscome* 'Magenta Delight'
Propagated by cuttings in late summer, this is a reliant performer with unusually dark leaves. May – October. 30cm. USDA 7a-11.

3 *Verbena officinalis* var. *grandiflora* 'Bampton'
Select a plant with a good colouring of stems and foliage. I divide my plants in spring and also take cuttings in late summer. Plants from seeds vary in colour, both leaves and flowers. June – October. 60cm. RHS H6.



POOLSIDE COOL

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

This pot sits by the swimming pool where it has to look good from the first warm days in May right up to September. The planting also has to work at night, when the lights and candles are lit and the pool garden is elevated to a theatre-like set. I have chosen plants that will provide interest for the whole season, but also make sure the ensemble changes through the season and ends up in an exuberance of lush foliage and flowers.

How to achieve the look

I've kept the plant selection cool, but you could easily use blue-flowering plumbago and pink-and-purple cosmos. *Pelargonium tomentosum* is one of my favourites for its scent and leaves and we also train it as an espalier at the back of the loggia. *Plectranthus argentatus* is another favourite, flowering in a pale lilac in summer. *Salvia* Love and Wishes (= 'Serendip6') will flower all summer, but you will have to make sure it doesn't get swamped by its neighbours. *Plumbago auriculata* f. *alba* starts flowering at the height of summer and I like to think of it as fireworks, especially at night. *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Purity' is my desert island plant and I have grown it forever for its beautiful flowers and determination.

The pretty terracotta pot is from Impruneta, a small village outside Florence where the potteries produce a vast array of different styles. I've loved them ever since I visited the village while I was studying in Vienna. The pots are resistant to frost, even on a Viennese roof terrace.

Many plants in this arrangement are very hungry, so I will feed them with a liquid fertiliser right until the end of the growing season. Discreet staking will be necessary to avoid damage and enable me to tease some pelargonium and plectranthus shoots right to the top. Salvias and cosmos will have to be deadheaded and if any plant tries to take over, it will have to be curtailed with secateurs.

Plants

1 *Pelargonium tomentosum*
Heavenly minty scented and easily propagated by cuttings. Small, white flowers, but mainly grown for its leaves. July – October. 1.25m. AGM. RHS H1C, USDA 10a-11.

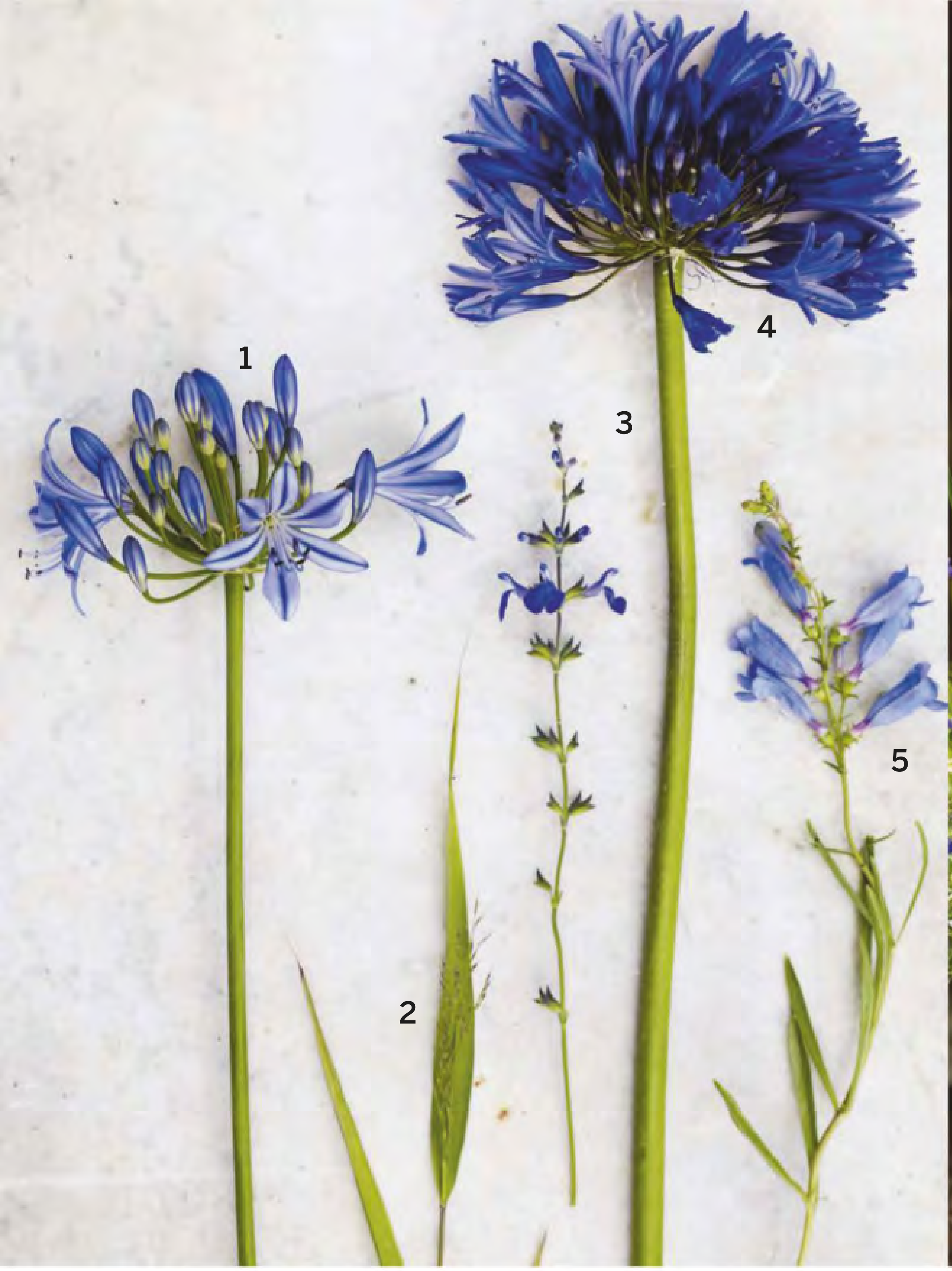
2 *Salvia* Love and Wishes (= 'Serendip6')
Rich, purple flowers with dark-purple racemes. Benefits from deadheading and feeding. June – October. 1m. RHS H3, USDA 9a-11.

3 *Plumbago auriculata* f. *alba*
Pure-white flowers on terminal racemes. Needs full sun and a sheltered position. July – October. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 8b-11.

4 *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Purity'
Great cut flower that benefits from deadheading. June – October. 1.2m.

5 *Plectranthus argentatus*
Pale-lavender flowers in racemes. July – September. 1m. AGM. RHS H1C, USDA 10a-11.

6 *Fuchsia* 'Hawkshead'
Hardy fuchsia with white flowers. June – October. 1m. AGM. RHS H6.



SUMMER SKIES

WORDS JACKY MILLS

When I think of summer, images of blue skies come to mind despite the often sombre reality. Here I've chosen a monochromatic scheme using just blue flowers to compensate for those occasional grey days. Set off beautifully by the zingy, fresh green of the *Hakonechloa*, the warm rust of the containers prevents the scheme from looking too cold and will later enhance the autumn colouration of these grasses. Repetition keeps the design simple, and more effective than a busy display.

How to achieve the look

These galvanised colanders are sometimes sold as vintage shellfish buckets, sometimes as olive baskets – either way, they make attractive planters. As the bases are slatted, I lined them with hessian. With the oil drum (centre), I removed the lid with an electric saw before drilling drainage holes into the base. I then cleaned the inside and filled it with broken polystyrene before sinking a plastic pot containing the penstemon into the top.

All these plants enjoy sun and good drainage. *Agapanthus* will flower better when its roots are restricted, so allow it to bulk up for a few years before splitting clumps in spring. Both the cultivars here are reasonably hardy, but protect them with a thick mulch if overwintering outside. *Salvia* 'Blue Note' has aromatic foliage and, like the low-growing penstemon, will flower all summer if regularly deadheaded. Cut the latter back to about 15cm after the worst of the frosts in spring and take cuttings as an insurance against winter wet if planting in the ground. The deciduous *Hakonechloa* is a non-invasive, slow-growing grass from Japan. Fully hardy, it prefers moisture, so add some leaf mould to the mix. Propagate by division after cutting back to the ground in late February. For later colour, add *Salvia uliginosa* 'Ballon Azul', a dwarf selection, with blue-and-white flowers.

Plants

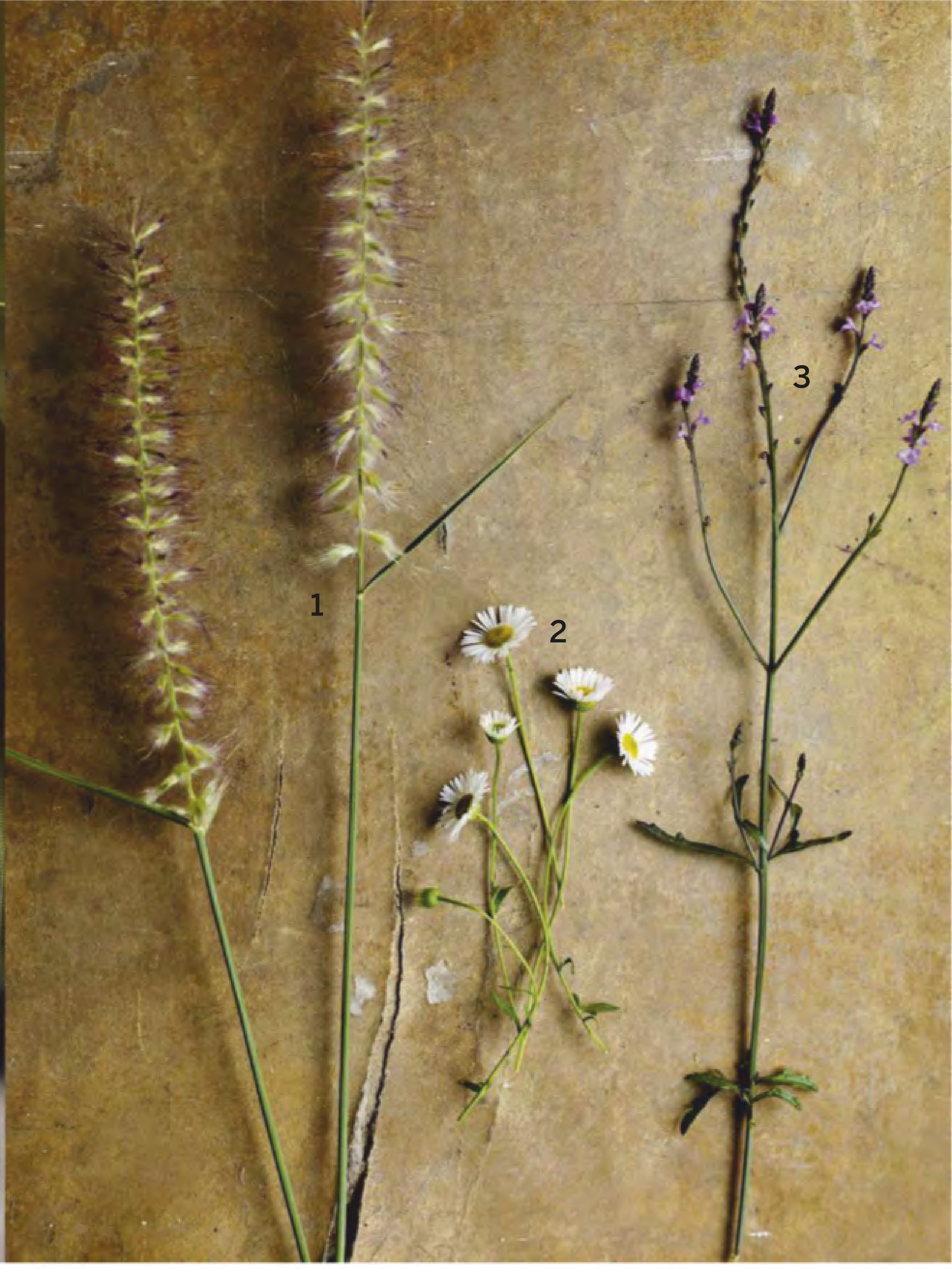
1 *Agapanthus* 'Charlotte'
A compact cultivar with pale-blue flowers and a pronounced stripe to each petal. July – August. 45-60cm.

2 *Hakonechloa macra*
A slow-growing, mound-forming grass producing fine sprays of pale-green flowers in early summer. 30-40cm. AGM. RHS H7.

3 *Salvia* 'Blue Note'
Bushy, free-flowering, half-hardy perennial with aromatic foliage below spikes of hooded, blue flowers. May – November. 50-60cm.

4 *Agapanthus* 'Midnight Star'
Clump-forming perennial, with umbels of deep-blue flowers held on stout stems above narrow, strap-like leaves. July – August. 70cm. RHS H5.

5 *Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Electric Blue'
A hardy perennial producing intense blue, tubular flowers on short stems. June – September. 45-55cm. USDA 6a-10b.



THREE OF A KIND

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

Pots are generally positioned in prominent places, so whatever you choose to plant in them needs to look good. This means changing the display regularly through the season, which inevitably means you should have multiple pots with things 'coming on', in readiness to bring out into the spotlight when they are about to perform. With this pot I deliberately chose plants that continue to look good for weeks, if not months, on end with very little effort.

How to achieve the look

In general I find displays containing either a single plant or a combination of three plants work best. In this arrangement I have chosen three mutually compatible plants that work in harmony with each other, both in terms of 'feel' and flowering longevity. The overall effect is soft and diffused yet sculptural, with the slender, pale-pink brushes of the *Pennisetum orientale* 'Shogun' floating above the mound of light-grey foliage to great effect.

Choose as deep a pot as possible, to get the maximum depth of soil. It must have a hole in the bottom with crocks spread over it for drainage. In most of our pots we use peat-free compost with added grit, in addition to slow-release fertiliser and vine weevil control. I like to use grit for the top of the pot as an aesthetic dressing and to aid watering; with large pots such as this you will need to water as often as three times a week in summer.

Most importantly good forward planning is critical. Wherever possible you should try to get to know how your reserve bench of plants performs and when they'll shine to ensure your pot has a seamless succession of flowering display.

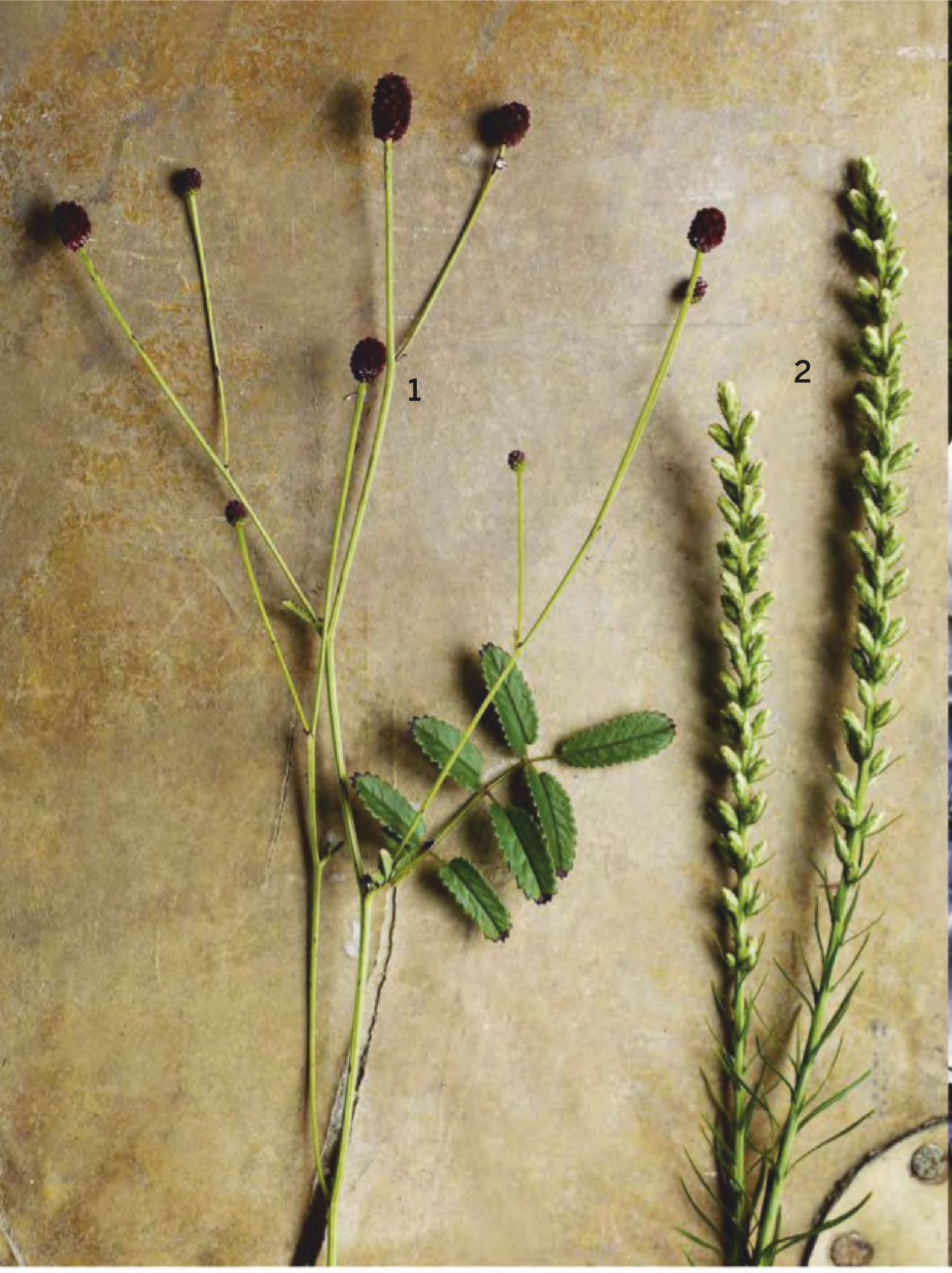
Throughout the season, I try to remember to take notes and make drawings as an aide-memoire of successes and failures, flowering times and the relative sociability or otherwise of the various companions. If you lack the time to do this, photographs taken at regular intervals would serve this purpose well.

Plants

1 *Pennisetum orientale* 'Shogun'
Upright, blush-pink flowers are flecked with purple and appear from midsummer to the first frosts. 1.2m. RHS H3.

2 *Erigeron karvinskianus*
The Mexican fleabane produces masses of small, daisy-like flowers and requires little or no maintenance. June – October 30cm. AGM. RHS H5.

3 *Verbena officinalis* var. *grandiflora* 'Bampton'
Another easy plant that produces airy, lavender-pink flowers. June – October. 60cm. RHS H6.



LIVING HISTORY

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

Long before Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson bought Sissinghurst in 1930, the Elizabethan manor house was used as a workhouse, and Vita and Harold rescued several 'coppers' from its 19th-century laundry to reflect their interest in the house's history and the lives of its previous residents. They placed three such coppers in the garden, one in the Lower Courtyard, one in the Phlox Garden and this one at the centre of the Cottage Garden.

How to achieve the look

Old laundry pots and dolly tubs are relatively easy to source from flea markets and reclamation yards and will develop a similar patina to this 'copper', albeit on a smaller scale. You'll need to drill four to five drainage holes with a sharp 8-10mm bit and cover with crocks so they can drain freely, but they work well as containers for a looser style of planting.

For this pot I've opted for an instinctive and intuitive display that I thought would either be a joyous success or fail gloriously. It's a combination of two plants that I hoped with their contrast in flower shape and form would provide not only a potency within the display but also an energy and strength equal to the setting. The main protagonist is the low-growing *Sanguisorba* 'Tanna', which has tight, wine-red flowerheads that emerge from a neat, rounded cushion of small, green leaves. The neat, oval bobbles measure around 50mm in length and appear from June until mid-August. Over the summer the flowerheads gently age to a dark, chocolate-brown, then form a seedhead that endures until late winter. Alongside it, I have planted *Liatris spicata* 'Floristan Weiss', a plant I love to weave into my planting to act as a motif running through the border.

Both plants need fertile, moist soil to flower well, and are best in full sun or semi-shade. They are easy, undemanding plants, requiring very little maintenance and are pest and disease free.

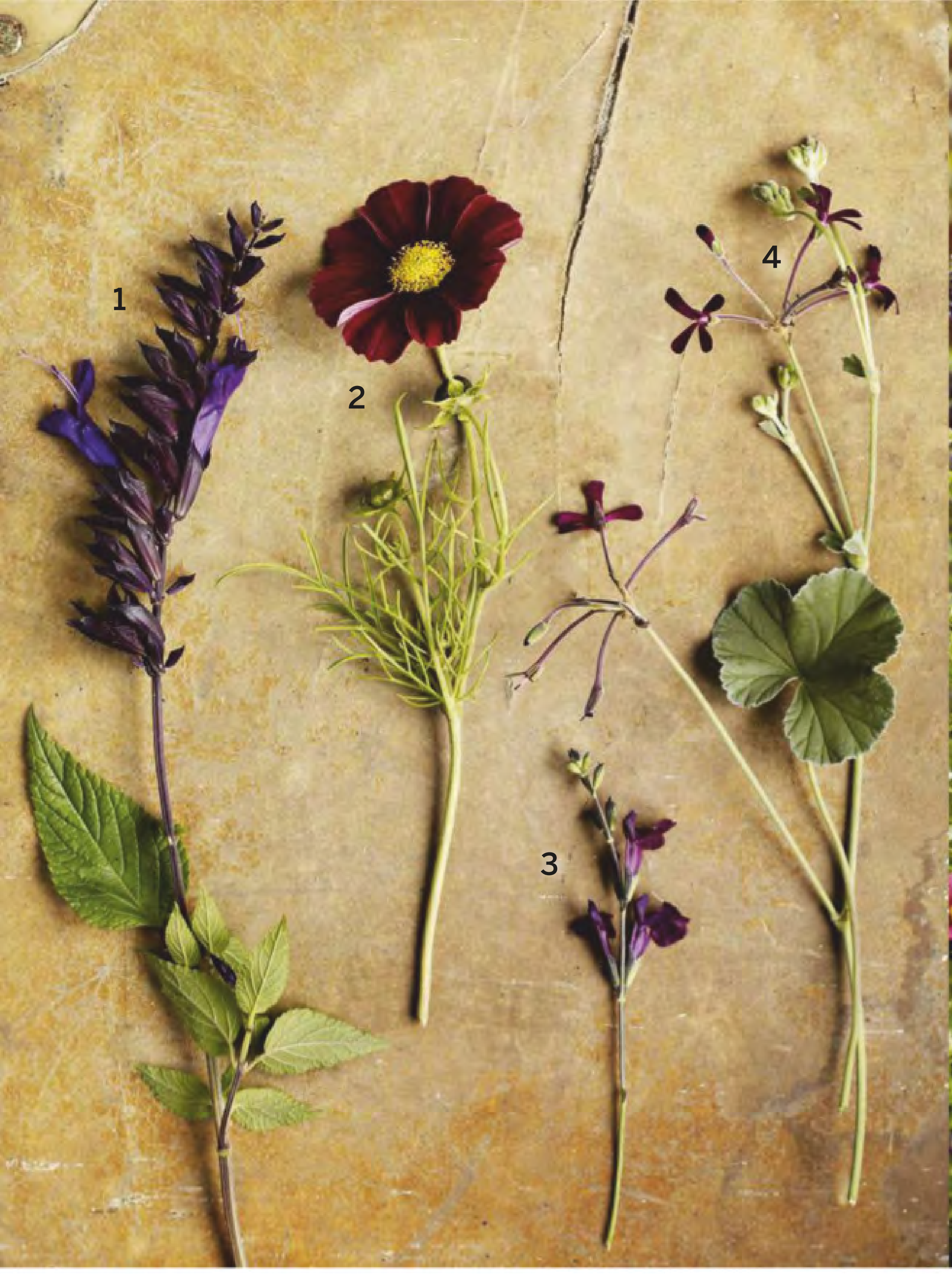
Plants

1 *Sanguisorba* 'Tanna'
This cultivar is more tolerant of drier conditions than some others of its tribe and is therefore more suited to pot culture. It is fully hardy and can be propagated by division. June – August. 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

2 *Liatris spicata* 'Floristan Weiss'
The bottlebrush-like, creamy-white flowers of this American perennial open from top to bottom from mid- to late summer. It also has attractive, narrow, grass-like foliage, and can be propagated by seed in autumn or from division in spring. July – September. 60cm. USDA 3a-8b.

LATE SUMMER

Summer is in full swing and these pots bring on the heat. Yellow, orange, reds and deep purples rise above a foundation of lush green foliage. Encourage displays to tumble down characterful containers to emulate the more relaxed atmosphere of lazy days spent soaking up the sun.



PLAY OF LIGHT AND COLOUR

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

This ornate terracotta pot was bought many years ago from a small pottery near the Tuscan city of Siena. It sits in an intimate, enclosed area behind an oversized, aged, oak door that leads from the potting shed yard into the rose garden, so it's one I pass several times a day. As this area is not generally open to visitors, I can relax and have fun with the display here, trying out plants and combinations with some interesting results.

How to achieve the look

My starting point was to create a display of sufficient volume and size to stand up for itself against the relative enormity of the wooden door and brick wall. At the same time, I wanted a display that was both generous with layers of depth and interest, and relaxed in its composition and plant choice. I deliberately didn't want to introduce complexity or sophistication; instead, I felt that a subtlety of contrast between the solidity of the wall and the diaphanous nature of the plants would be more compelling and satisfying.

When considering the composition of a particular display, I tend to think of layers of planting. In this arrangement, I engineered four layers that are both distinct yet also merge with their neighbour. From top to bottom, these are *Salvia* 'Amistad', *Cosmos bippinatus* 'Antiquity', *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder' and finally *Pelargonium sidoides*. It is possible with this type of 'layer' planting to edit out one plant type completely – if, for example, it has gone over prematurely – and replace it with another plant type without disturbing the overall arrangement too much.

What I like about the finished display is the dazzling effect it gives, like lights being switched on and off inside a house. You have the sparkle of the cosmos in shades of saturated crimson contrasting with the melancholic purple-plum colours of the *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder' and pelargonium, and then the light-catching explosion of *Salvia* 'Amistad'. This display is long lasting with minimal effort; just ensure that you regularly deadhead the cosmos.

Plants

1 *Salvia* 'Amistad'
An easy-to-grow salvia that flowers from May to October from a spring sowing. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H3†.

2 *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Antiquity'
Flowers open a rich crimson and fade to antique bronze-salmon with age. 45cm. RHS H3.

3 *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder'
A shrubby perennial from the Dutch nursery De Hessenhof. Maroon flowers, at their best in June, continue into October with minimal deadheading. 75cm. AGM. RHS H5.

4 *Pelargonium sidoides*
Abundant crimson-black flowers contrast with silver foliage. 25cm. AGM. RHS H1C.

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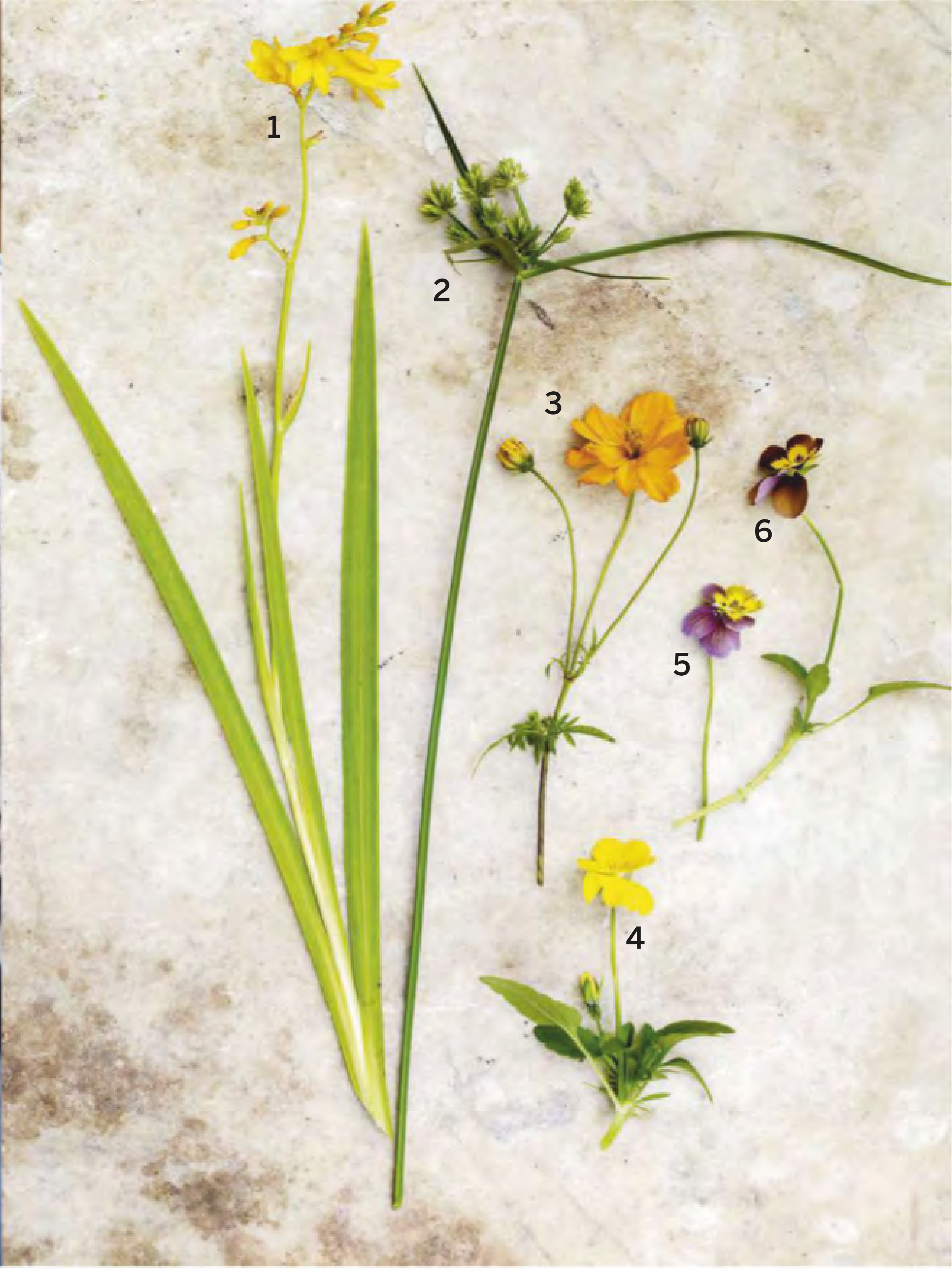
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



BRING ME SUNSHINE

WORDS JACKY MILLS

Yellow lifts the spirits – think of daffodils, sunflowers and the buttery hues of autumn leaves. I've used it here with the sword-like leaves of a crocosmia combined with the architectural umbrella sedge. The linear composition is softened with the warm tones of the cosmos and tumbling violas at the base. Using a splash of purple – opposite to yellow on the colour wheel – in the violas adds some contrast and makes the whole scheme more vibrant.

How to achieve the look

I like the retro feel of this 1930s' enamel bowl in cream and green. The colour is more sympathetic to yellow than the classic blue-and-white enamelware, and the handles make it very portable. I drilled holes through the base to aid drainage, adding a layer of gravel followed by a free-draining compost.

The annual *Cosmos sulphureus* 'Bunte Lichter' is a useful mix of single and double flowers in a range of yellows and oranges. Sow in modules in the spring and plant out in May, keeping a few in pots to use in containers. Pinching the tips out will increase flowering and stop the plants becoming too tall. Crocosmias can be bought as corms in the autumn when there is a greater choice of cultivars, or in full flower from garden centres in the summer. The bright-yellow flowers of *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Coleton Fishacre' are followed by architectural seedheads too. Their horizontal nature sits well with the flat heads of the clump-forming *Cyperus*, topped with clusters of pale-green flowers. A mix of three different-coloured bedding violas creates a dancing effect as they merge together towards the base. If you regularly deadhead them, you'll be rewarded with a continuous display over summer. The airy, yellow flowers of *Bidens aurea* would also work well, having similar fern-like foliage to the *Cosmos,* or try a *Coreopsis* cultivar.

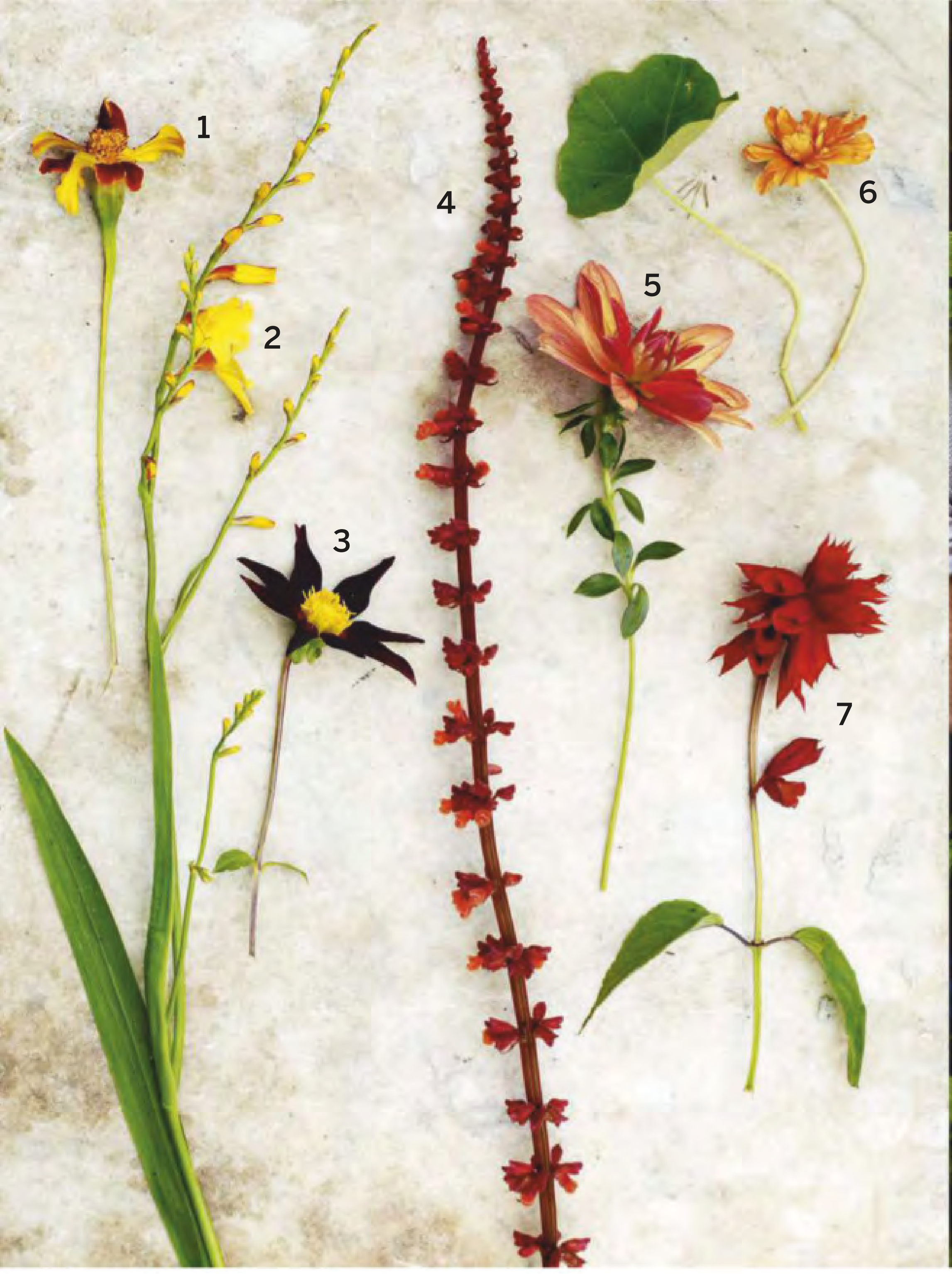
Plants

1 *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Coleton Fishacre'
An upright, hardy perennial with sprays of yellow flowers. July – September. 75cm. RHS H5.

2 *Cyperus eragrostis*
This hardy, erect, rhizomatous sedge has green bracts surrounding inflorescent clusters. July – September. 50cm.

3 *Cosmos sulphureus* Bunte Lichter seed mix
A half-hardy annual with single and double flowers in a mix of orange shades. June – October. 60-90cm.

4 *Viola cornuta* 'Deltini Yellow'
5 *Viola* x *wittrockiana* 'Delta Yellow With Purple Wing' and
6 *Viola* x *wittrockiana* 'Deltini Honey Bee'
Three violas that provide a long period of colour and combine well with the other plants in the mix. These compact bedding plants come in a wide range of colours. May – October. 15-20cm.



ALL FIRED UP

WORDS JACKY MILLS

Later summer is the time of reds and oranges, rich burnt colours, mingled with pinks and purples… anything goes at this time of year. As the season progresses and the sun lowers in the sky, the changing light levels intensify the colours even more. This display will extend into autumn, getting bigger and better, and culminating in a crescendo of fireworks. I hope it will inspire you to create a dazzling floral pyrotechnic display of your own.

How to achieve the look

My partner made this container using a discarded tailgate as the frontispiece. The rest was built using offcuts of plywood screwed together. We added drainage holes, covered these with polystyrene chips, and placed it in position in a sunny spot before filling with a loamy compost.

Salvias are an extremely versatile genus, coming in a wide variety of forms and colours. *S. confertiflora* gets very tall, and is best grown each year from cuttings, which are great for container planting as they will flower within a season. The dark-purple stems of both salvias pick up on the moody, almost black petals of *Dahlia* 'Verrone's Obsidian'. The orange petals of *D.* 'Jescot Julie' are backed in red, giving a stripy effect – a combination repeated on the trumpets of *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Harlequin'. Its lance-like foliage contrasts well with the ferny leaves of *Tagetes* 'Burning Embers'. This annual is great for borders and pots alike, with a long flowering season; I've previously teamed it with the tangerine dahlias 'Nicholas' and 'Autumn Fairy'. Collect seed each year to develop your own strain and sow indoors, February to March. The double-flowered apricot nasturtium will clamber through everything but is sterile, so take cuttings in late summer. A weekly high-potash feed will encourage flowering, but watch out for earwigs on the dahlias.

Plants

1 *Tagetes* 'Burning Embers'
A tall, half-hardy annual with single, deep-red and orange flowers. June – October. 40-70cm.

2 *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Harlequin'
A striking cultivar with multi-tonal flowers. August – October. 50-60cm.

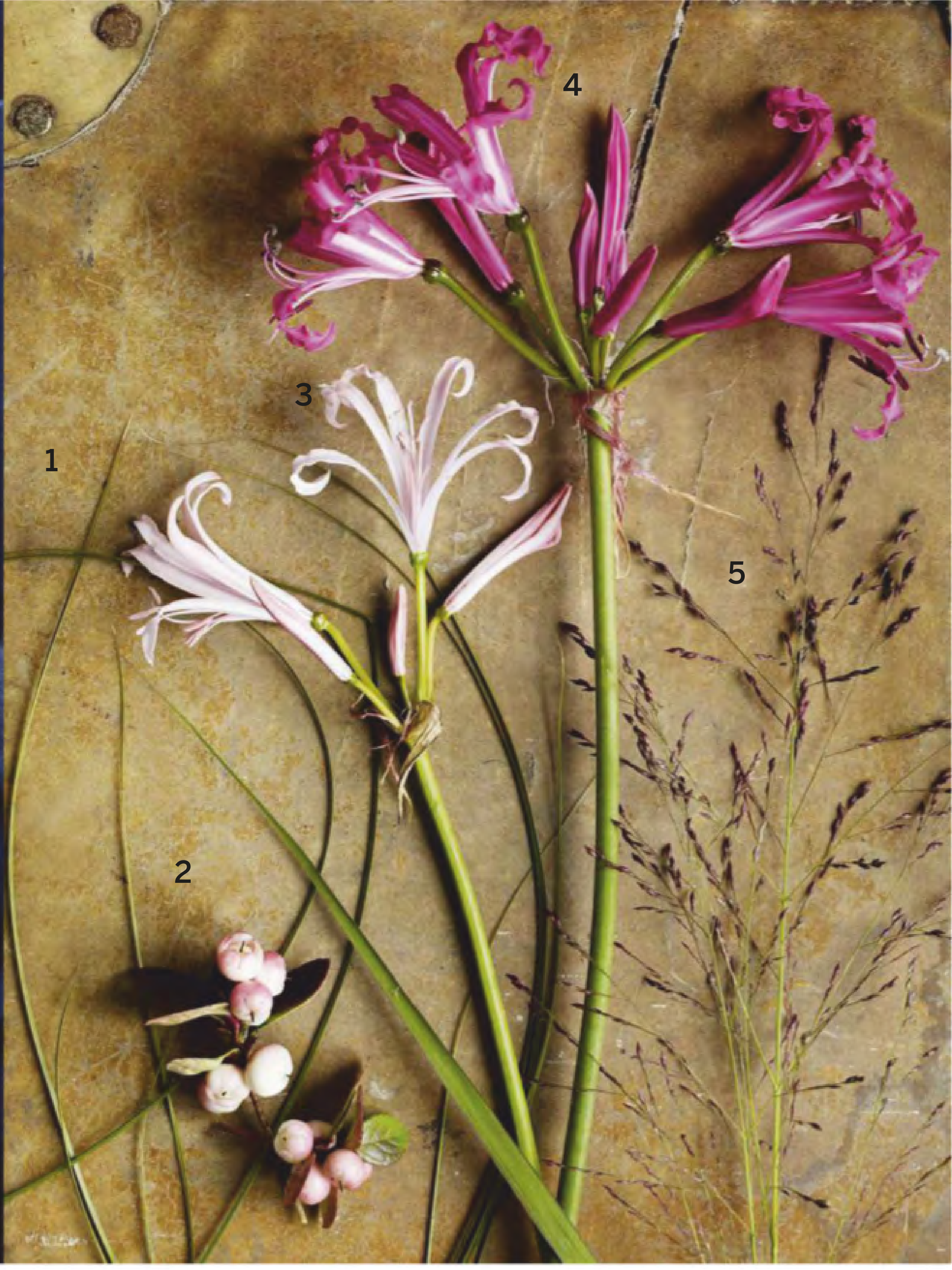
3 *Dahlia* 'Verrone's Obsidian'
A single orchid type with contrasting yellow anthers. July – October. 60cm.

4 *Salvia confertiflora*
A tender shrub that takes easily from cuttings. August – November. 1.5m. RHS H2.

5 *Dahlia* 'Jescot Julie'
A double orchid dahlia. Lift after the first frost. July – October. 75cm.

6 *Tropaeolum majus* 'Hermine Grashoff'
Double, orange flowers. Treat as an annual and propagate from cuttings. June – October. 30cm. RHS H3.

7 *Salvia splendens* 'Jimi's Good Red'
A tender perennial with bright-red calyces. August – November. 1m.



GOOD COMPANIONS

WORDS TROY SCOTT SMITH

This unused doorway provides me with an ideal place to pop a few plants down where they can be enjoyed closer to both nose and eye level. The overall grouping is not so important; it is more about the individuals, which might otherwise languish in flower in the nursery, unseen and unappreciated. Here I have used a few spare grasses and pots of *Gaultheria* to show off the gloriously flamboyant nerines.

How to achieve the look

Pots are so useful for placing plants in places where they would not normally be happy. In this south-facing doorway I have used pots of nerines with grasses and gaultheria, none of which would be natural bedfellows of the nerines. However, because the pots are temporary and will be moved when 'over', it doesn't matter if the plants are not entirely suited to the conditions; for the few weeks they are here they will be more than content.

Nerines hail from South Africa and many species are not hardy, but cultivars of *N. bowdenii*, which originate in South Africa's Drakensberg Mountains can reliably withstand temperatures down to -15°C. I have chosen two *N. bowdenii* cultivars – 'Nikita', which I like for its subtle colouring, and the bright, tangy-pink 'Isabel' – that contrast nicely with each other.

The bulbs should be planted – whether in open ground or in pots – so that their necks and shoulders are above soil level. If the bulbs are planted any deeper, flowering can be delayed a year. Like many of these South African bulbs, once settled they should not be disturbed, and they seem to enjoy a degree of overcrowding.

From late summer, loose umbels with up to ten flowers with wavy recurved petals appear on erect leafless stems and last for many weeks. The flowers also offer a faint musky scent, so consider placing the pots where the fragrance can be appreciated. Strappy foliage appears once the flowers fade and persists through winter.

Plants

1 *Carex testacea*
Although this ornamental grass will take some shade, it colours up best in full sun. 1.5m. RHS H5.

2 *Gaultheria* 'Pearls'
Dwarf evergreen with pale berries from late autumn. 15cm. RHS H5.

3 *Nerine bowdenii* 'Nikita'
Its subtle, soft pink contrasts nicely with the straight species. 60cm.

4 *Nerine bowdenii* 'Isabel'
Happiest in a sunny position and well-drained soil. September – October. 50cm. RHS H5.

5 *Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah'
Prefers full sun or partial shade, but tends to flop in too much shade. 90cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

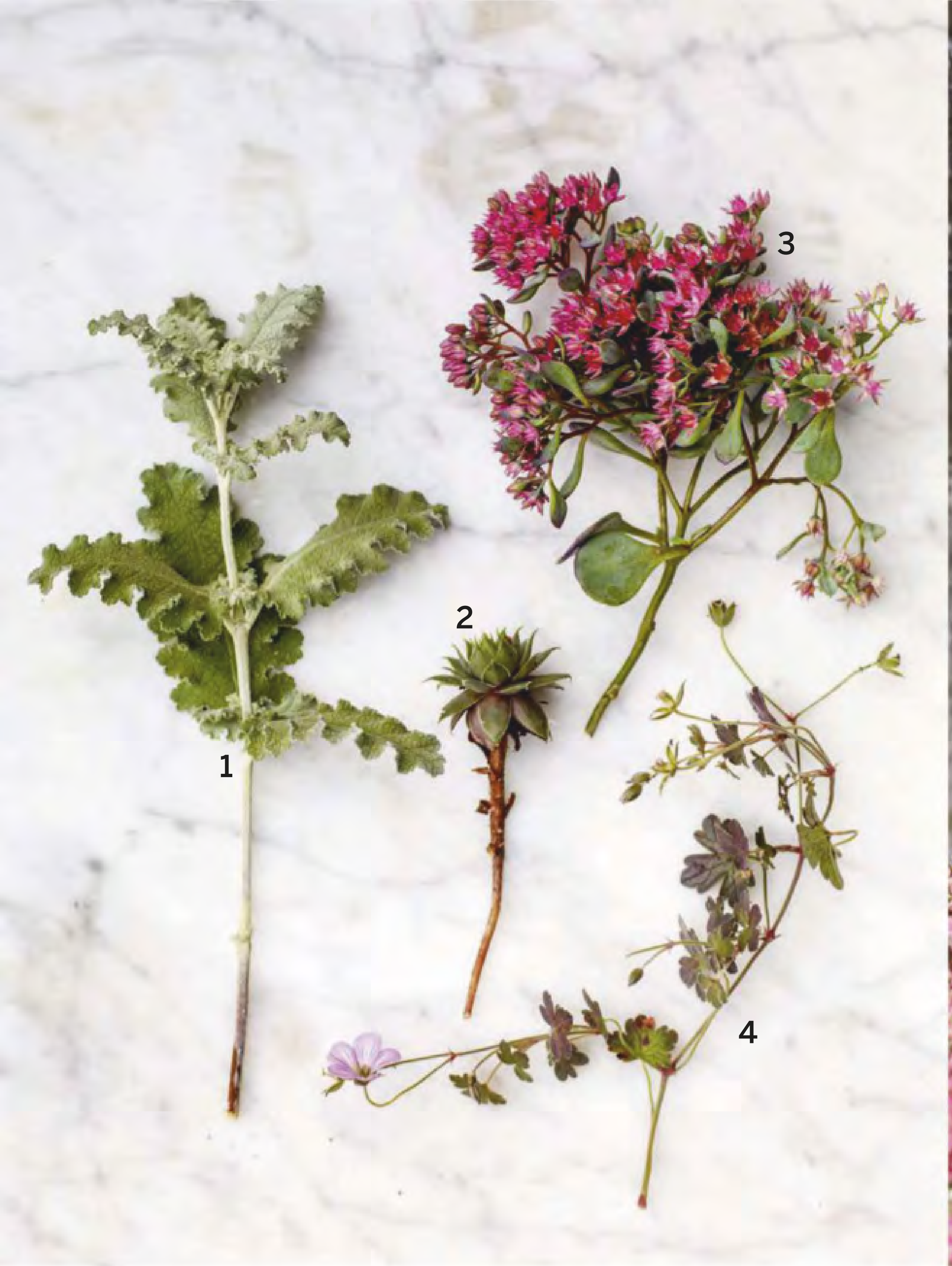


TABLE FOR FOUR

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

I rarely buy single plants, but when I do, I usually grow them in pots for a season or two before I plant them out. This selection came from a Rare Plant Fair and I had a small table in mind when selecting them. The *Hylotelephium ewersii* var. *homophyllum* 'Rosenteppich' is a great low-growing sedum and the star of this group. *Buddleja glomerata* provides a great background and a bowl of *Geranium* 'Dusky Crûg' adds more colour and texture.

How to achieve the look

I have a soft spot for grey- and silver-leaved plants and was very happy to find a beautiful specimen of sedum. The colour fits perfectly with an old metal pot, where the paint is partially worn off. The buddleja is still young and should flower in the summer next year. It has velvety, silver leaves with ruffled edges and will develop into a medium-sized shrub once planted out. *Geranium* 'Dusky Crûg' features chocolate-purple leaves and light-pink flowers and works well in an old terracotta bowl. The little sempervivum has produced some offsets and seems to feature all the colours of its neighbours. I quite like the skirt of the old, brown leaves, which also features on its young offsets.

I drilled drainage holes in the metal containers for the sedum. After covering the holes with crocks and a layer of grit, I used multi-purpose compost with added grit as a planting medium. It is important to loosen the existing rootball to prevent roots from growing in a circle. All plants will be potted on or planted out in spring, so the pots I am using are not much bigger than the ones the plants were grown in. I will be able to split *Hylotelephium ewersii* var. *homophyllum* 'Rosenteppich' and *Geranium* 'Dusky Crûg' in spring and so increase them in number. The buddleja will be trained against a south-facing wall and the sempervivum will find new neighbours for another season.

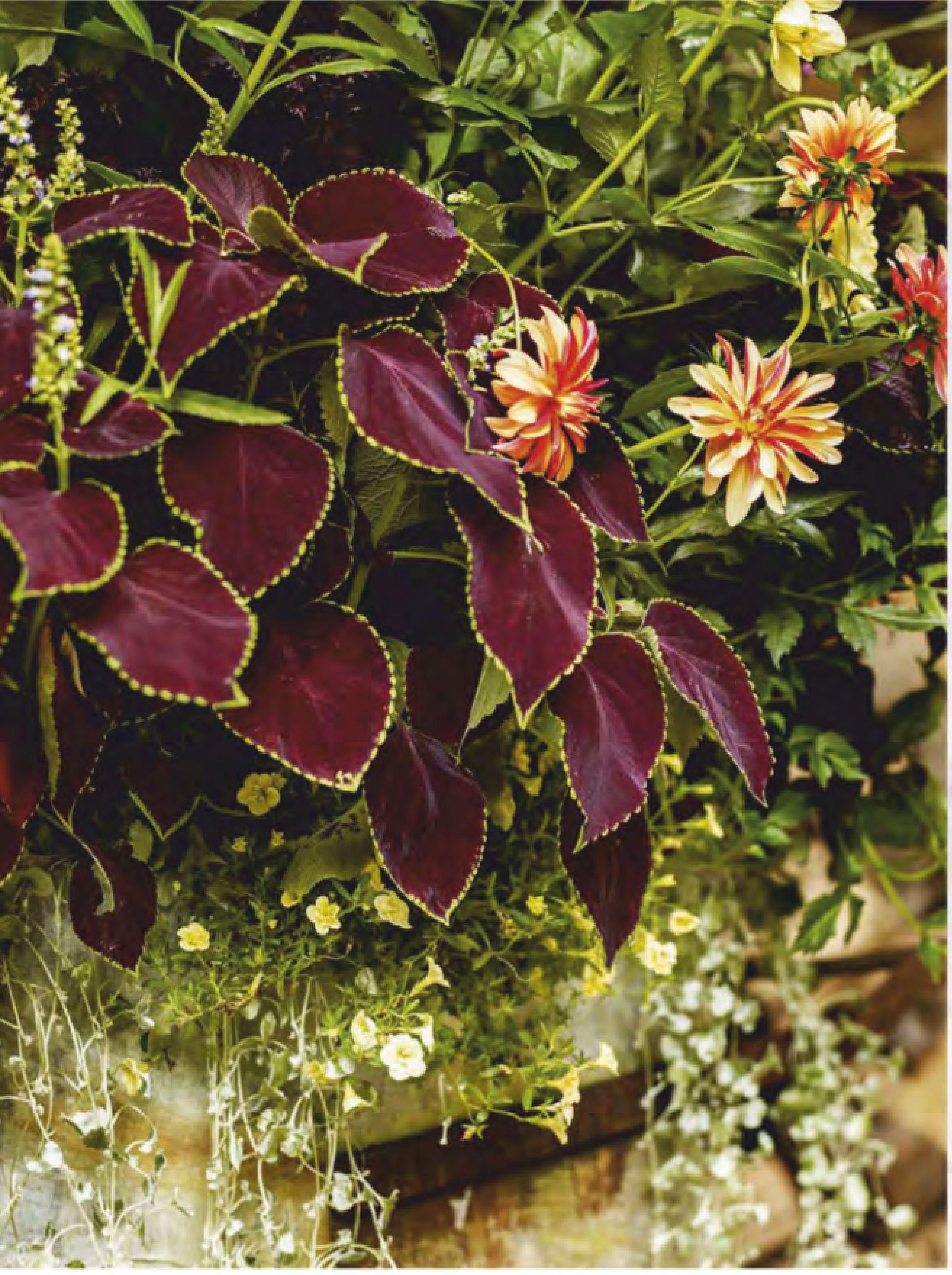
Plants

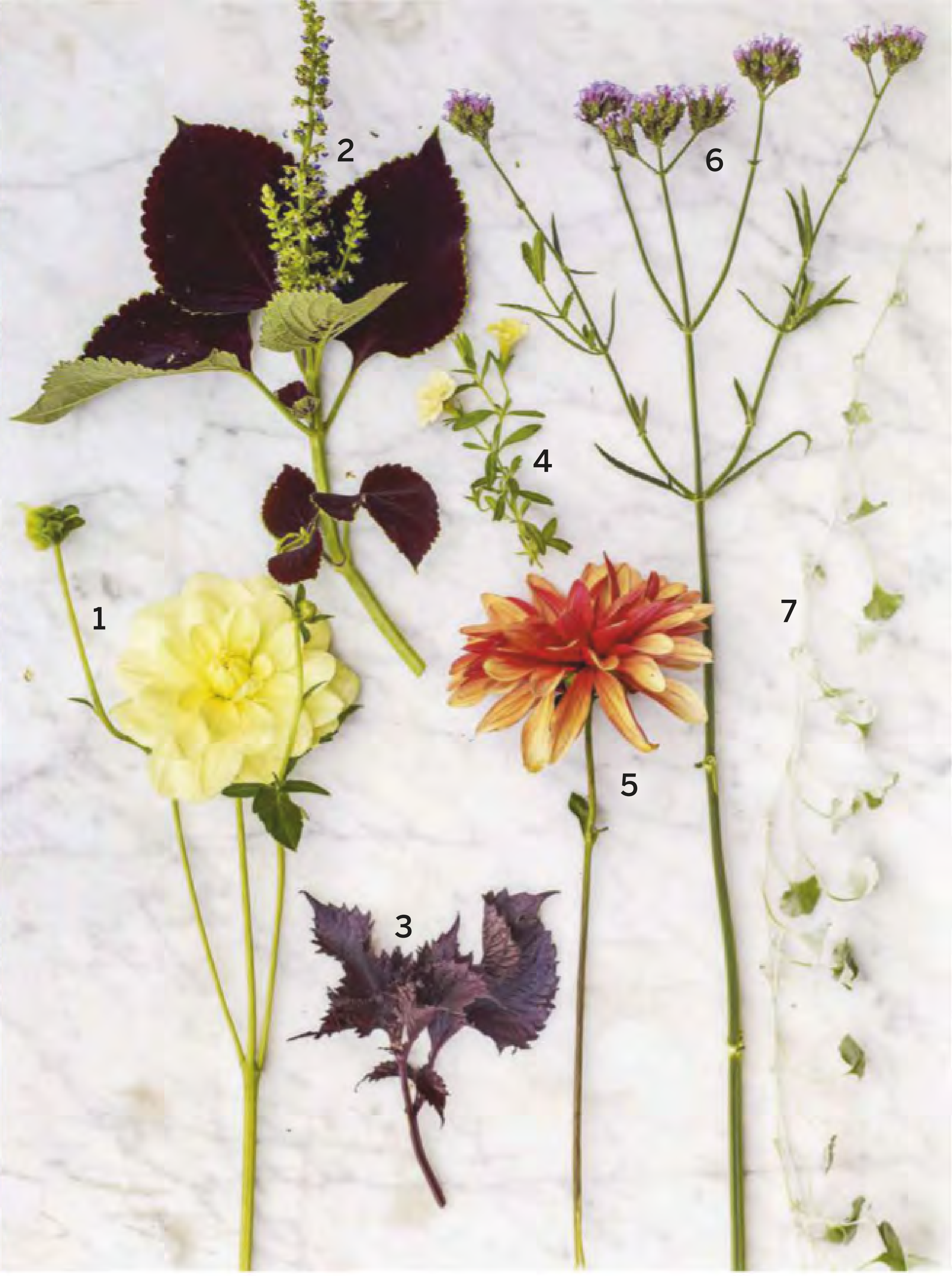
1 *Buddleja glomerata*
Cut back hard in March to encourage strong, healthy growth and flowering. August – September. 4m.

2 *Sempervivum* 'Rubin'
A very old friend of mine and easy to grow in full sun. Good drainage is essential. Flowers profusely in summer. 10cm. RHS H5.

3 *Hylotelephium ewersii* var. *homophyllum* 'Rosenteppich'
Clump-forming, compact habit; best split in spring to increase numbers. August – September. 15-20cm.

4 *Geranium* 'Dusky Crûg'
Healthy, chocolate-purple leaves with light-pink flowers. Full sun or part shade. June – October. 30cm.





GOING OUT WITH A BANG

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

The log store is not the most attractive area so I decided to brighten it with some lush plants in a Victorian water carrier. Dahlias are magnificent in late summer into autumn and 'Glorie van Heemstede' and 'Jescot Julie' are two of my favourites. The dark-leaved *Perilla* complements the flowers of *Solenostemon* 'Chocolate Mint', while the shyly trailing *Calibrachoa* Can-can Double Dark Yellow repeats the yellow of *Dahlia* 'Glorie van Heemstede'.

How to achieve the look

The background is very dark, so the pale-yellow flowers of *Dahlia* 'Glorie van Heemstede' show up well. The petals of *Dahlia* 'Jescot Julie' have a purple underside, providing a subtle link with the *Verbena bonariensis*, the *Perilla frutescens* var. *crispa* and the rich foliage of *Solenostemon* 'Chocolate Mint'. Plants with dark flowers and leaves add depth to any display and make lighter colours shine even more. To achieve a different effect, you could easily change the colours of the dahlias, and use some tall grasses or *Plectranthus argentatus* to make the display lighter. For me, it is important that the planting achieves height and volume to balance the dimensions of the container.

A water carrier is an ideal, if extravagant, planter. It's easy to move and its volume allows for a great amount of compost. I have drilled several holes in the base of the container, and covered them with a few crocks and a bag of hydroleca, which is light and allows for good drainage. Good-quality, multi-purpose compost with a weekly liquid feed will nurture the display until the first strong frost. Staking is essential, especially for the dahlias. I usually use hazel sticks, because they seem to disappear among the plants and are readily available. After the first frost I will save the dahlia tubers, plant out the verbena and compost the rest, then wheel the container into the garage.

Plants

1 *Dahlia* 'Glorie van Heemstede'
Water lily dahlia with pale-yellow flowers, good for cutting and borders. July – October. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H3.

2 *Solenostemon* 'Chocolate Mint'
Elegant plant with lavender-coloured flower spikes. May – September. 40cm. USDA 10a-11.

3 *Perilla frutescens* var. *crispa*
Edible leaves and strong aroma. 80cm. AGM. RHS H3.

4 *Calibrachoa* Can-can Double Dark Yellow
Half-hardy, trailing perennial with petunia-like yellow flowers. May – October. 45cm.

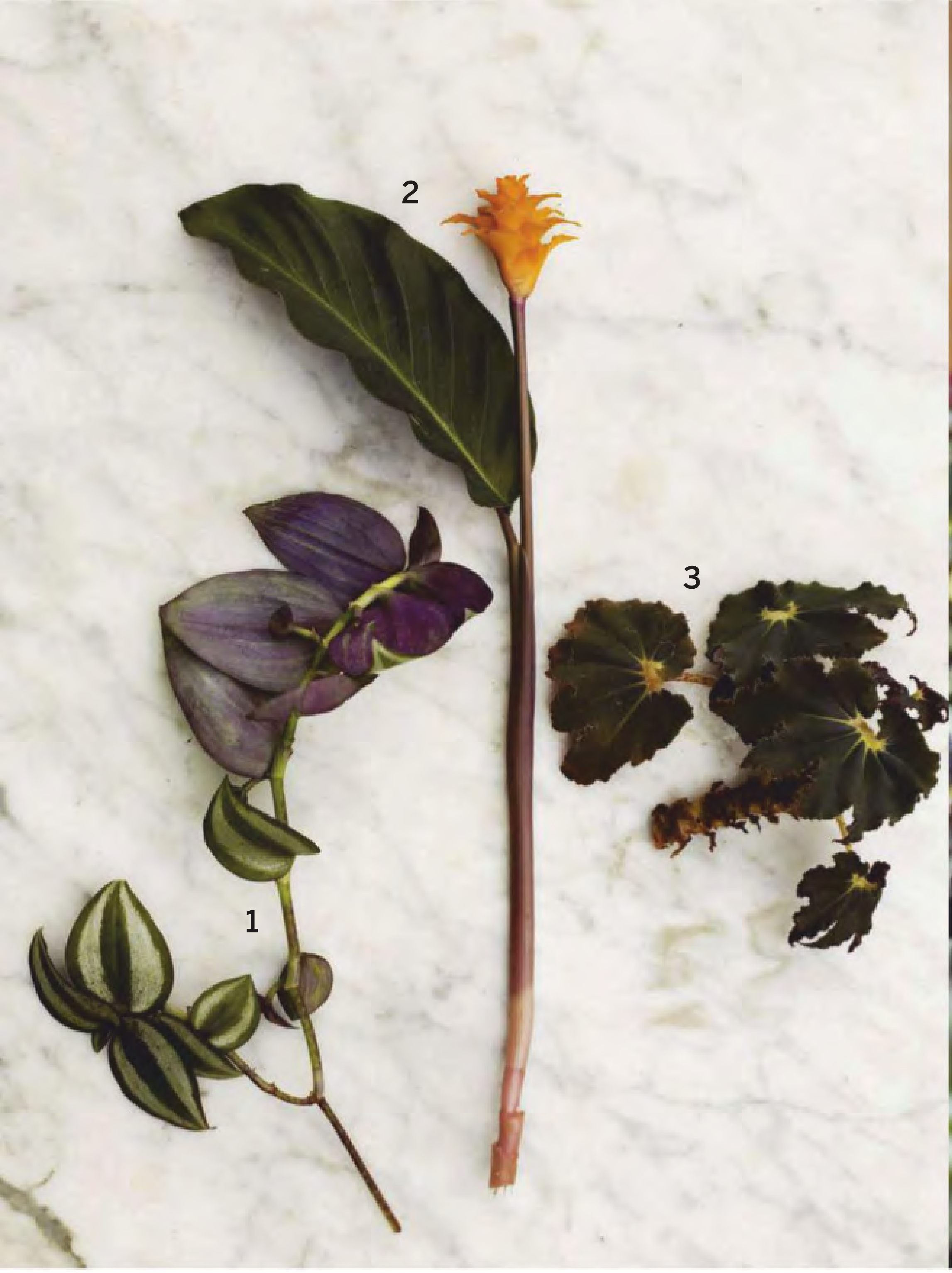
5 *Dahlia* 'Jescot Julie'
An orchid-flowered dahlia with orange flowers and a purple underside. July – October. 75cm.

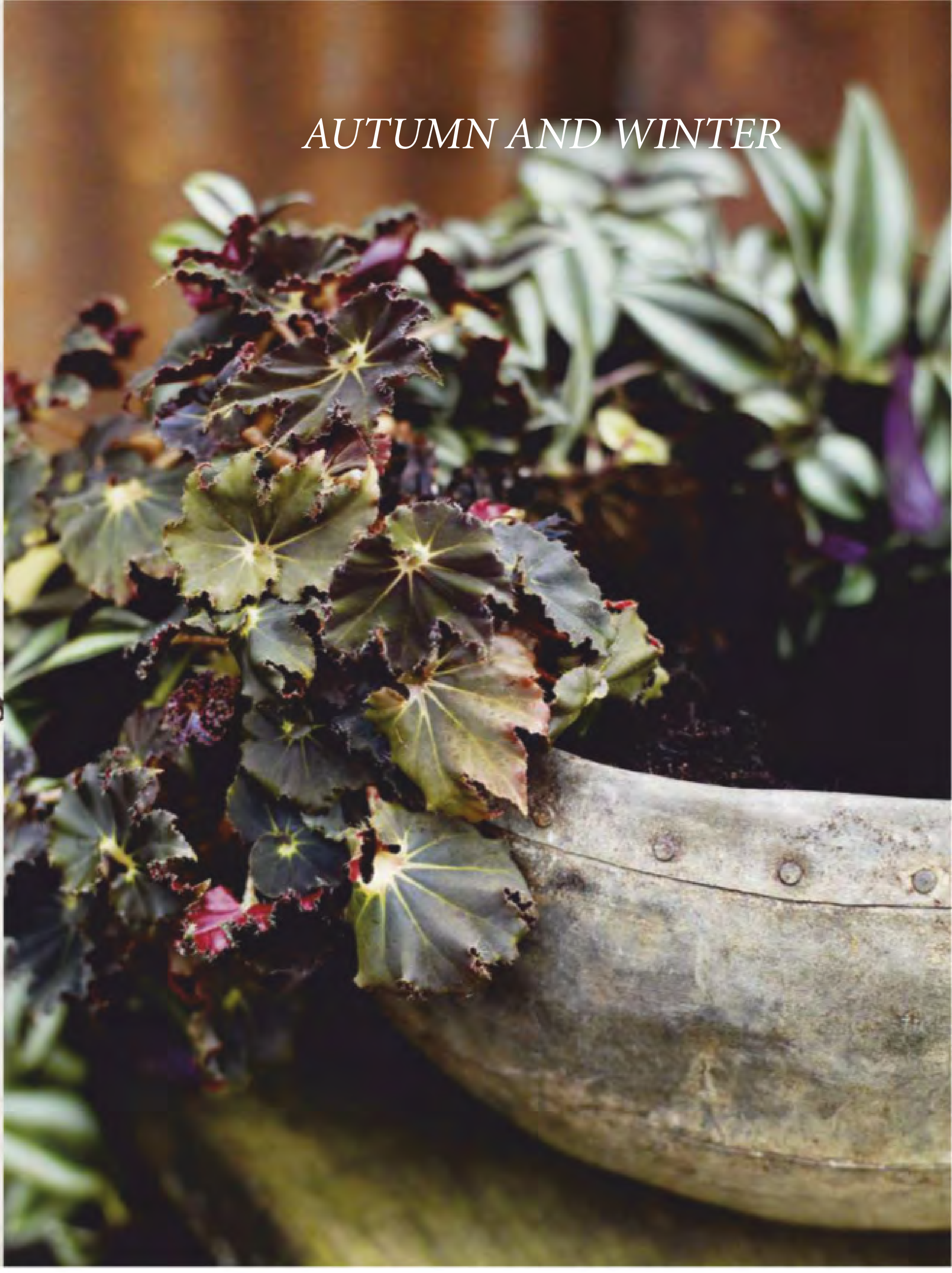
6 *Verbena bonariensis*
Garden stalwart with small, purple flowers, adding height and airiness to the scheme. July – November. 2m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.

7 *Dichondra argentea* 'Silver Falls'
Tender trailing perennial. A great foliage plant. 1.5m. USDA 9a-11.

AUTUMN AND WINTER

Late containers mean colour in warm corners and leafy grottos. A retreat into the house or greenhouse allows colours to remain bright. As the days shorten plants are exotic and foliage takes the lead.





FLAMING TORCHES

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

November is the time to indulge in some luscious planting, with the memory of warm autumn colours still fresh in the mind. The inspiration for this scheme came from the flowers of *Goeppertia crocata* 'Tassmania', which reminds me of burning torches. The beautiful metal container, found in an antiques market, complements the colour scheme of this arrangement of leaves and bright flowers – almost like a bowl of fire.

How to achieve the look

The plants are linked by the colour purple, found on stems and leaves, especially the underside of the *Tradescantia*. The flowers of the *Goeppertia* are the obvious stars of the display, but even without them, the shapes and textures of the leaves make an interesting arrangement. I especially love the shape of the container, which seems to elevate the planting from the table.

Drainage is important for most plants grown in a pot. It becomes even more important when there is no drainage hole, as in this case. Using a saucer or plate to capture excess water would, however, spoil the look of this arrangement. To get around this, I filled about a third of the pot with hydroleca (you could also use grit, gravel or crocks). This will provide a good reservoir of water but will prevent the roots from sitting in water for too long. Multi-purpose compost is a good choice here, but the key is watering. Only water when the compost is dry, and then not too much; maybe a little, three times a week.

Once the flowers of the *Goeppertia* have gone over, cut them off as low as possible, without injuring the leaves. The *Tradescantia* will need some reining in by cutting off shoots, and the *Begonia* needs to be given enough space to develop more leaves and eventually flowers. Feed with a liquid fertiliser every two weeks.

Plants

1 *Tradescantia zebrina*
A stalwart of indoor plants and easy to propagate. There is a good selection of cultivars available, but I still prefer the species. Trails to 1m. AGM*. RHS H1C, USDA 9a-11†.

2 *Goeppertia crocata* 'Tassmania'
Bright-orange, torch-like flowers for weeks. Repeat flowering, if happy. The leaves get easily scorched in direct sunlight. 50cm.

3 *Begonia* 'Muddy Waters'
This rhizomatous *Begonia* dislikes wet feet, so be careful with watering. Has pale-pink flowers, but I grow it just for the leaves. Spreads slowly. 20cm. RHS H1B, USDA 10b-11.

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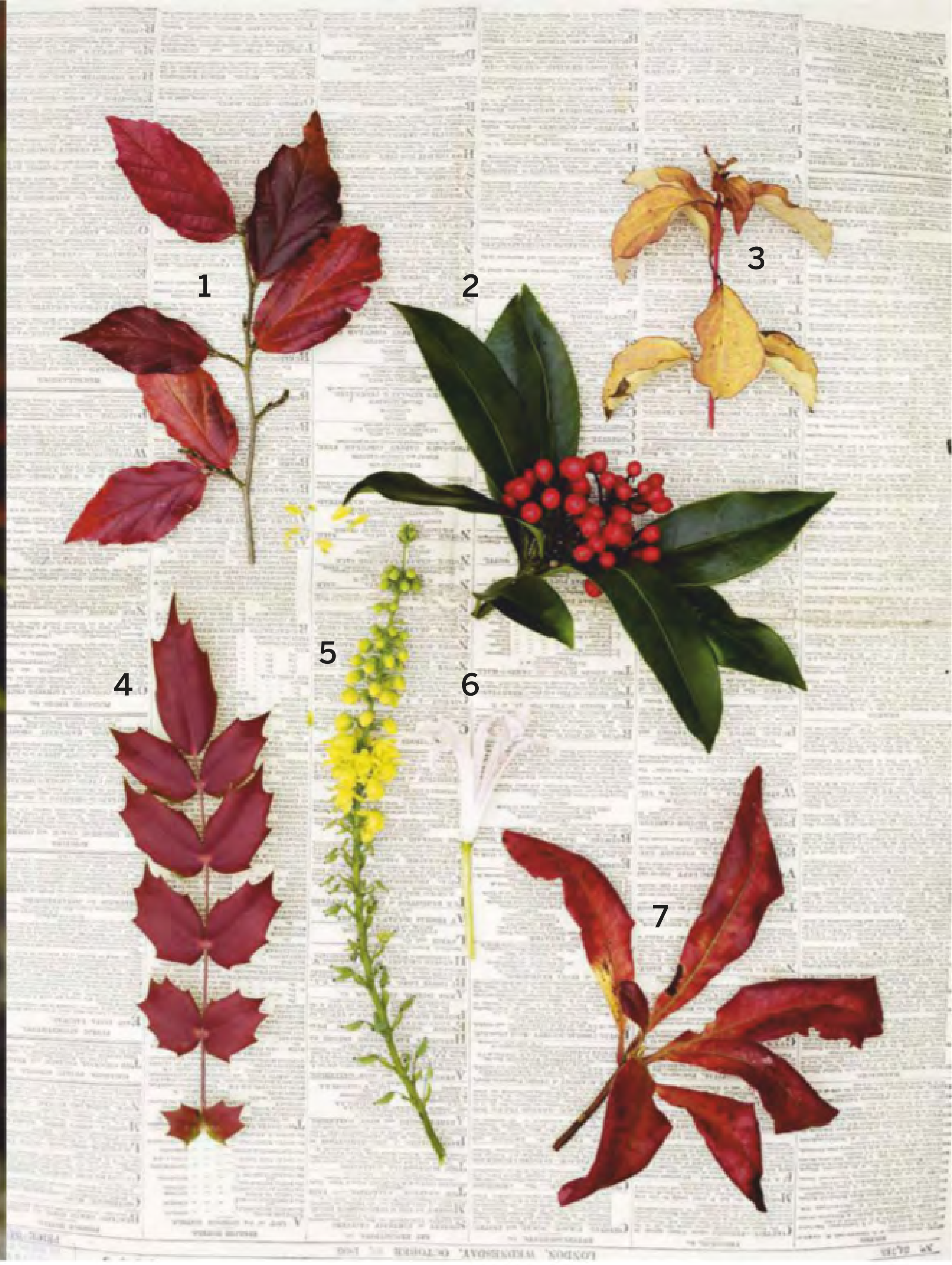
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



WARM CORNER

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

As the days draw in, focus shifts indoors, intensifying the demand for plant decorations in and around it. With so few flowering plants available, I am grateful I can call on autumn's rich tapestry to sustain me. This mock barrel vessel, made from oak slats and steel hoops, has galvanised handles to make it easier to move around. Here it's dressed with warm autumn foliage and berries along with a few hardy flowering plants to lift the mood.

How to achieve the look

This is a temporary display made for a special occasion. The fiery autumn foliage contrasts well with the dark-green leaves of *Skimmia japonica* subsp. *reevesiana*, a hermaphrodite form that produces vermillion berries. As a rule, it is aesthetically more rewarding to set vibrant autumn colour off with a steadfast evergreen. I can remember seeing the large, brilliant-red leaves of *Vitis coignetiae* scrambling through an ivy at Great Dixter in East Sussex and thinking how heavenly the effect was in the gentle October light. Above the *Skimmia* is *Mahonia japonica*, which turns red in the autumn when it has been stressed. Here in the garden we have restricted this plant by growing it in a pot that is smaller than ideal, which encourages it to turn a smouldering shade of deep red. The ochre notes are supplied by *Cornus sanguinea* 'Anny's Winter Orange', which also boasts vivid stem colour throughout winter. On the right with sumptuous ripe-fig purple foliage, is x *Sycoparrotia semidecidua* 'Purple Haze'. Clusters of the fresh, yellow-green flower spikes of *Mahonia* x *media* 'Charity' top the display, and dotted through the arrangement are the soft-pink spidery flowers of *Nerine bowdenii* 'Vesta K'. In cold, still weather the deciduous autumn leaves in this arrangement might cling on for a fortnight but will shatter in warmer conditions. Either way, when the show is over, the arrangement will be dismantled.

Plants

1 x *Sycoparrotia semidecidua* 'Purple Haze'
Medium shrub with dark, plum-coloured foliage. 3m.

2 *Skimmia japonica* subsp. *reevesiana*
Small evergreen shrub with red fruits. 1m. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

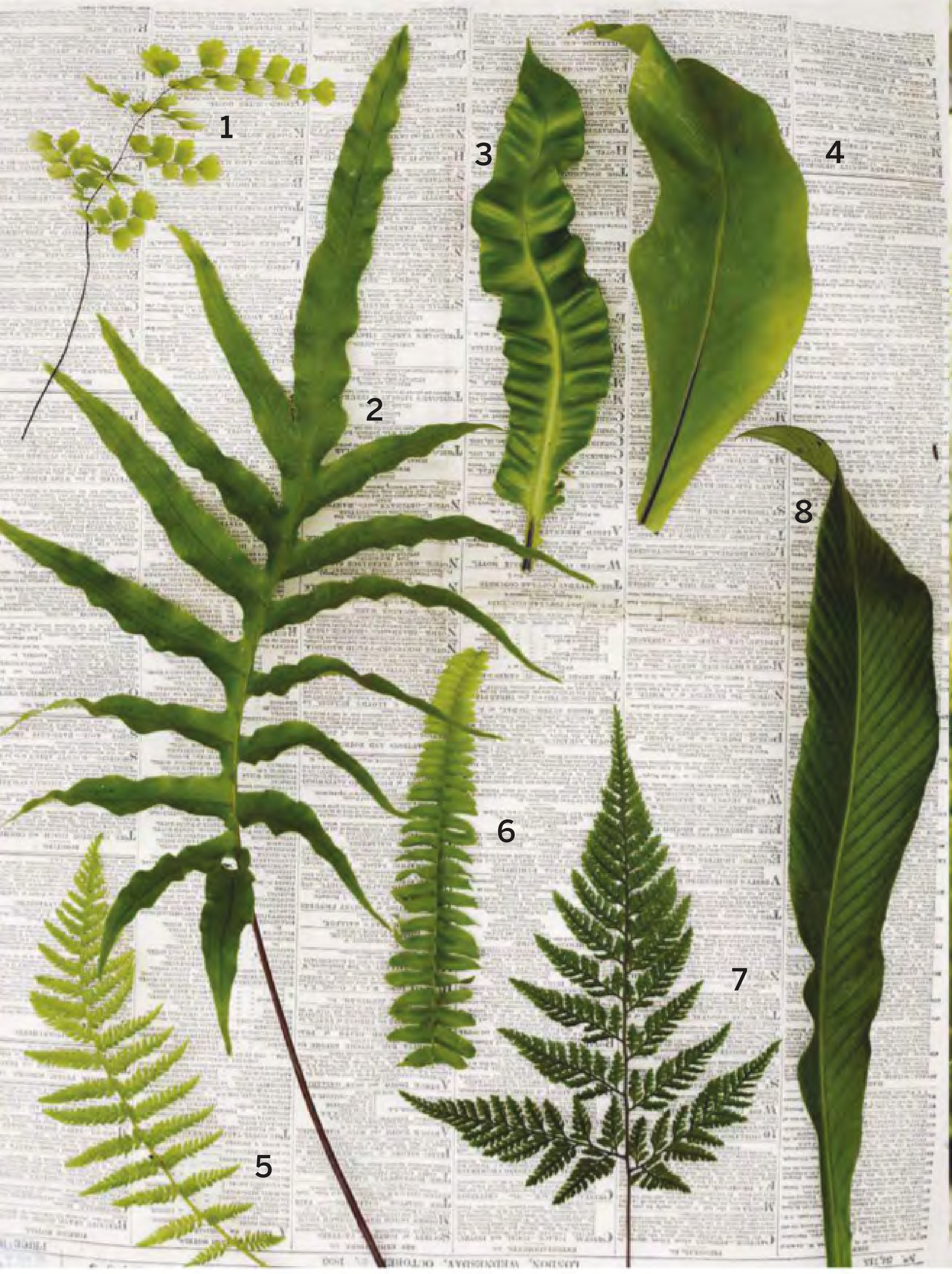
3 *Cornus sanguinea* 'Anny's Winter Orange'
Dogwood grown for its vibrant stem colour. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Mahonia japonica*
Evergreen shrub with scented, lemon flowers. 2m. AGM. RHS H5.

5 *Mahonia* x *media* 'Charity'
Large shrub with glossy foliage. 4m. AGM. RHS H4.

6 *Nerine bowdenii* 'Vesta K'
A pale-pink form of the hardy nerine. August – October. 50cm.

7 *Rhododendron luteum*
Red autumn foliage. 4m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



GREEN GROTTO

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

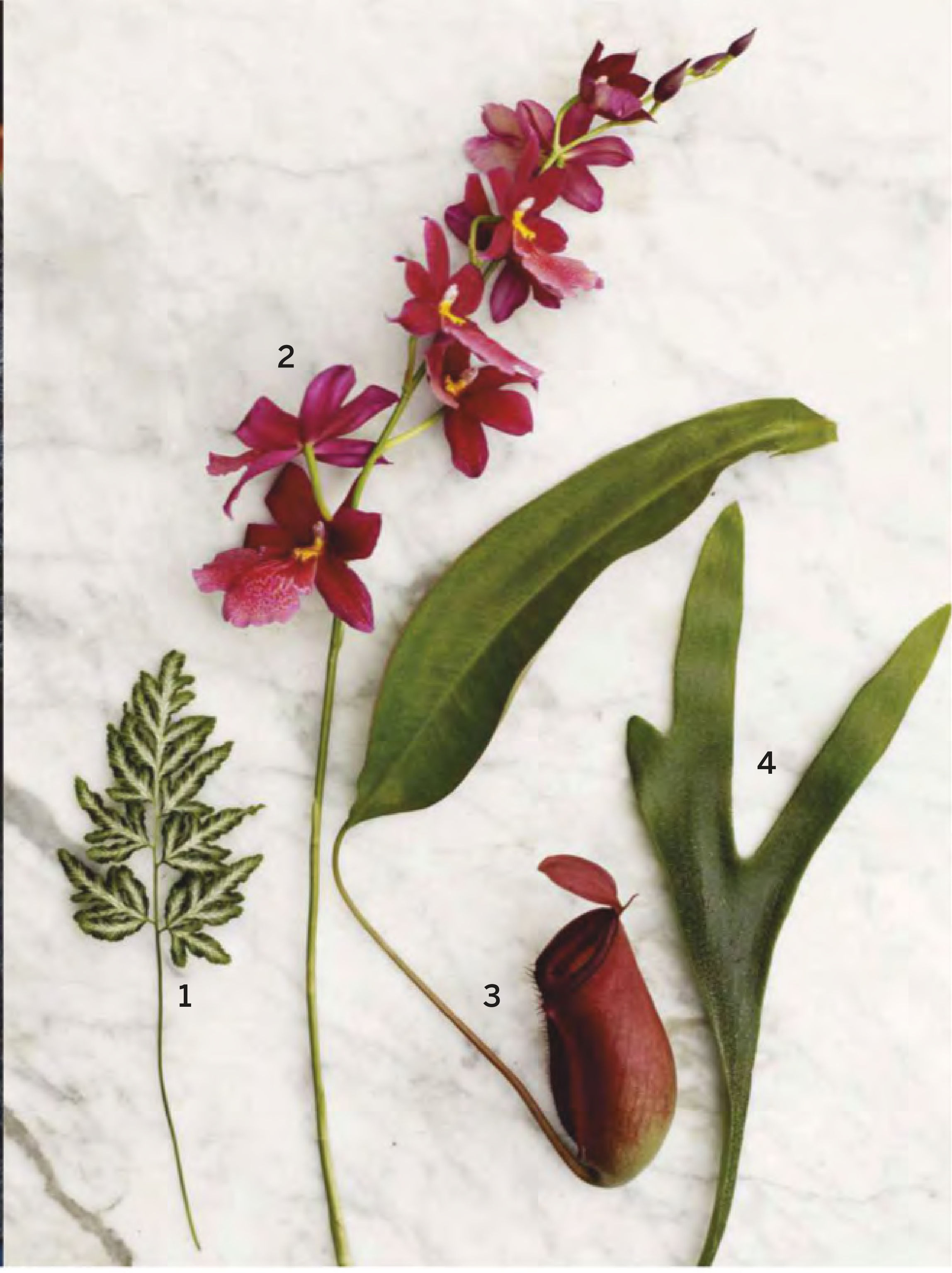
Indoor ferns always add a slightly exotic feel to conservatory displays. I love their graceful elegance, and frequently use them for displays in the house and – before frosts bite – sheltered parts of the garden. This arrangement features a collection of ferns presented in a vintage wooden dough bowl I found at a plant fair. The display is made for instant effect and should last for about a week or two, before returning the ferns to the humid atmosphere of the greenhouse.

How to achieve the look

Ferns make elegant displays as many species feature handsome, long-lasting foliage with a huge range of green shades, shapes, textures and habits. Here I contrast the different elements to highlight the attributes of each plant. Plants should be placed close together, but not so close as to appear squashed. The bird's nest fern, *Asplenium nidus*, makes a strong funnel with polished, stiff blades, and contrasts well with the softer, feathery foliage of *Nephrolepis exaltata*, spilling over the lip of the bowl. Next to this is the delicate maidenhair fern, *Adiantum capillus-veneris*, with leaflets arranged on fine, black, thread-like stems that shimmer at the mere mention of a breeze. Nestled at the back is the male fern, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, with elegant fronds peering through the leggy petioles of the striking *Phlebodium psudoaureum*. This fern boasts elegant blue-green fronds with a fluidity and presence that make it highly desirable. Also quite special is the epiphytic *Niphidium crassifolium*, known as the graceful fern. The ascending, undulating leaves are rigid and ribbed with a herring-bone pattern. The shape is quite different from that of *Asplenium nidus* 'Crispy Wave' directly below it, which has a tight vortex of crinkly leaves. Neighbouring these two ferns is the elegant rabbit's foot fern, *Davallia solida* var. *fejeensis*, with pretty, airy fronds that make a change in texture, shape and size.

Plants

1 *Adiantum capillus-veneris*
Best with high humidity and out of direct sunlight. 45cm. USDA 5a-8b.
2 *Phlebodium pseudoaureum*
Superlative fern – good form, habit and colour. 30cm. USDA 8a-10b.
3 *Asplenium nidus* 'Crispy Wave'
Houseplant that prefers free-draining compost. 1.2m. USDA 9a-11.
4 *Asplenium nidus*
Prefers free-draining compost. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 11-12.
5 *Dryopteris filix-mas*
Will grow everywhere but bogs. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
6 *Nephrolepis exaltata*
Good for cooler humid areas of the home. 90cm. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-12.
7 *Davallia solida* var. *fejeensis*
Happiest in a hanging basket in free-draining substrate. 1.2m. USDA 10a-12.
8 *Niphidium crassifolium*
Epiphytic so prefers free-draining soil. 45cm. USDA 10a-11.



JUNGLE IN A BOX

WORDS THOMAS UNTERDORFER

I got very excited when I heard a friend had decided to build a hothouse, and what better gift to take along for its opening than this box of treats? Its contents are all tried-and-tested indoor plants, some of which I grow in my cottage. All prefer a light position, without direct sunlight, and, with a little care, will become remarkable specimens. The plants will need to be potted on into individual pots, to give them the best possible growing conditions.

How to achieve the look

x *Oncidopsis* 'Nelly Isler' is one of my favourite orchids, so I was happy to find some flowering plants. *Nepenthes*, the pitcher plant, has fascinated me from an early age. Everything about it is exotic, and together with the staghorn fern conveys a feeling of the tropics and adventure. The brake fern plays an important role in linking the planting, providing additional interest and depth to the arrangement.

Wine crates make good and inexpensive containers in which to grow plants. In this case, I have used an older box covered in lichen and moss to give the display an even more verdant look. The crate is lined with plastic and half filled with hydroleca. I have kept the orchids in their pots, but all other plants have been taken out to give me more flexibility. The key is to make the arrangement look natural and to avoid leaves and flowers facing in the wrong direction. Ideally, the crate should be planted up a few days in advance of display. The gaps between the plants are filled with orchid compost, which can be used later to pot on the ferns and *Nepenthes*. All the plants should be potted on a week or two later, and the staghorn fern should be mounted on a frame. Direct sunlight and drafts should be avoided, high humidity encouraged, and the plants never allowed to dry out.

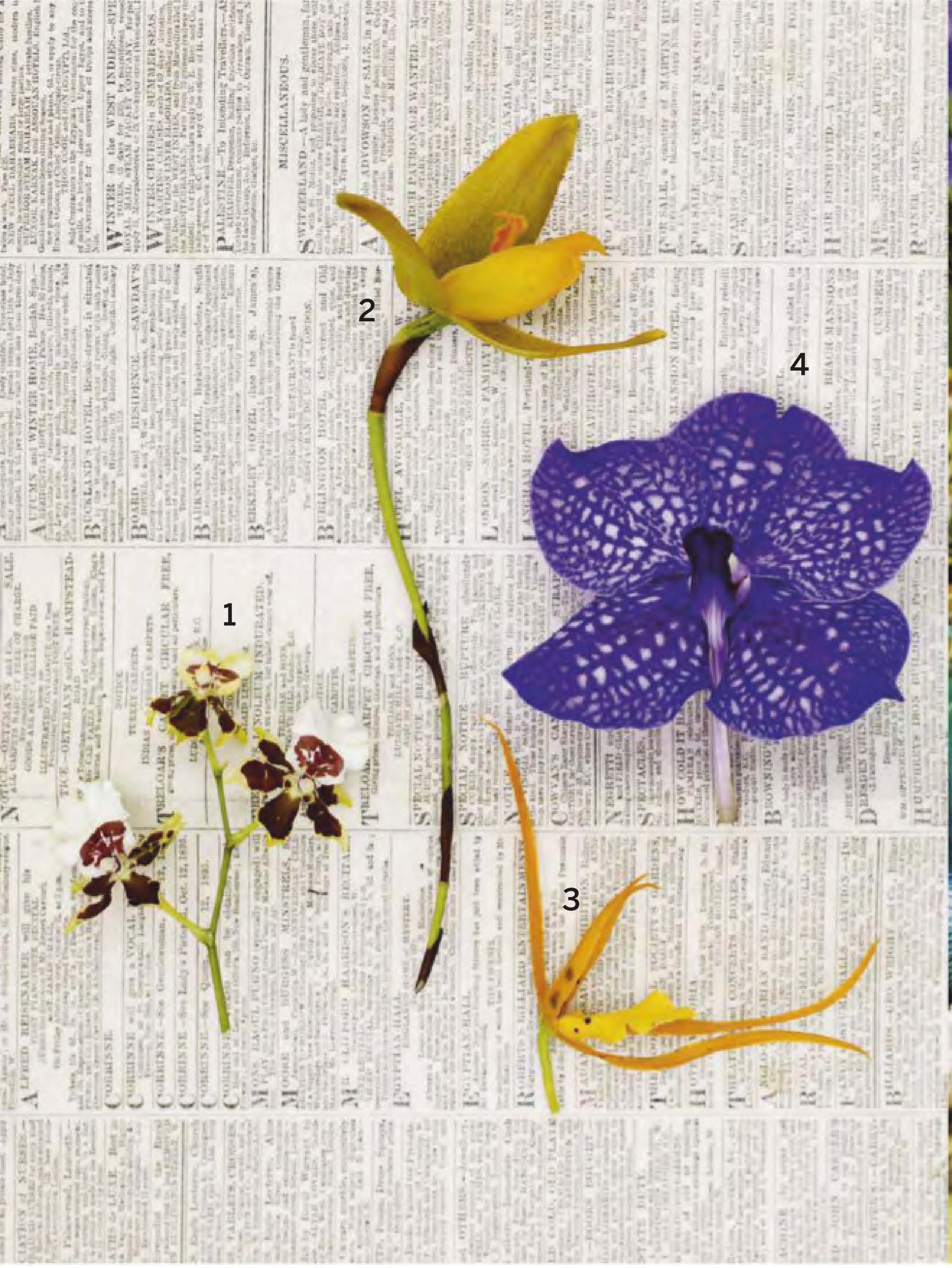
Plants

1 *Pteris ensiformis* 'Evergemiensis'
This striking brake fern will brighten up a room. Keep away from direct sunlight and cool drafts and keep the soil moist at all times. 90cm. USDA 8b-11.

2 x *Oncidopsis* 'Nelly Isler'
This orchid loves rainwater or distilled water and dislikes direct sunlight or drying out. High humidity is beneficial, but mine does well on a windowsill. 60cm. AGM. RHS H1A.

3 *Nepenthes alata* x *ventricosa*
A carnivorous plant that needs soil to be kept damp at all times, but make sure water drains off completely. No additional feeding required; capturing just two or three insects a month will suffice. Trails to 60cm. AGM. USDA 10a-11.

4 *Platycerium bifurcatum*
The staghorn fern does best mounted on a frame and hung on a wall, but smaller plants are usually grown in pots. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.



HOT-HOUSE PARTY

WORDS MATTHEW REESE

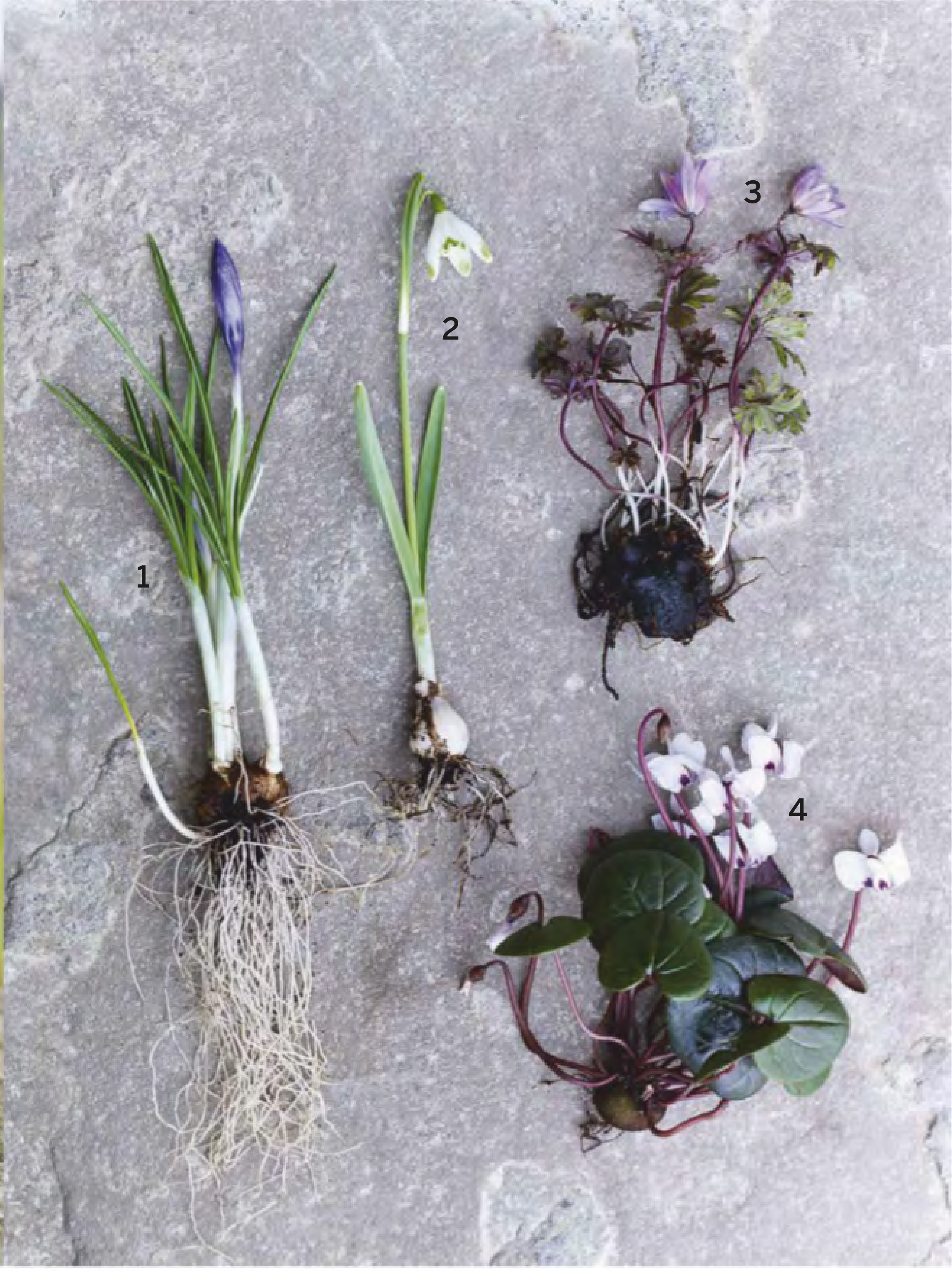
At this time of year, I often bring orchids in from the greenhouse to add a dash of exotic colour. When I do, I find it's more decorative and practical to display them in a watertight container than in a pot with drainage holes. This majolica jardinière is the perfect host. Its blue base fades into turquoise and if more blue were lost from the turquoise glaze it would become green, so the smart green orchid foliage makes a comfortable progression.

How to achieve the look

One of the trickiest aspects of combining orchids is that different orchids like different temperatures and light levels, so I'll use them in the main house or conservatory only for temporary weekend displays. Arching out on long sprays is x *Colmanara* 'Green Valley' in the Wildcat Series; its flowers are persistent and it is a vigorous, easy orchid that's best grown in coarse bark with daytime temperatures of 18-24ºC and 13-18ºC at night. Another good orchid for the novice grower is *Brassia* 'Orange Delight' (16-28ºC day, 12ºC night) with vivid spidery flowers that have a spicy scent. You can grow it in the house provided you give it humid conditions and keep it out of direct sunlight and drafts. Next to it is *Lycaste aromatica* (20-26ºC day, 15ºC night), a wonderful, strong-growing orchid that is scented heavily of cinnamon. It needs shade and humidity. The large, purple, tessellated flowers are x *Vandachostylis* 'Blue Magic' (18-25ºC day, 12ºC night), which has strong, ladder-like foliage and very long roots. Vandas need good light levels, although not direct light, and high levels of humidity. They can be grown in bark or as an air-plant provided the environment has high humidity. For this display, all of the plants are held in place with wire and left in their original orchid pots. I have added coarse bark around the roots to help retain moisture. Some of the roots are too long to fit in the pot and are allowed to drape over the side. The whole display is misted twice daily with rainwater; it is particularly important to use rainwater as hard water will cause lime deposits to mark the foliage.

Plants

1 x *Colmanara* 'Green Valley'
Needs shade and high humidity.
2 *Lycaste aromatica*
A good scented orchid, perfect for the first-time grower. AGM.
3 *Brassia* 'Orange Delight'
An easy orchid that can be grown in the house.
4 x *Vandachostylis* 'Blue Magic'
Can be grown in bark or without as an air-plant.



THE WOODLANDERS

WORDS HANNAH GARDNER

Woodlands offer the very earliest spring flowers as the plants have evolved to jump in and flower before the leaf canopy closes above them. Think of snowdrops, cyclamen and anemones that are often found mingling together on the forest floor in the eastern Mediterranean. These are all bulbs, corms or tubers that go into dormancy later in the summer. Displaying these plants in a home-made log planter leaves little room for misinterpretation. The texture of the bark (this is silver birch) gives the plants an immediate context.

How to achieve the look

The shiny, round leaves of the cyclamen bring texture and reflective light to the planting. While the large, open flowers of the crocus add a dramatic shot of vivid, ruby purple. The upright linear foliage is a good contrast and adds height. I tucked moss in between as a finishing woodland touch.

A resourceful friend of mine crafted the planter from the bark ring of an off-cut of timber. It has a sawn wooden disc glued into place as a solid base with drill holes added. It will last for years. I potted up a few of each bulb into little pots of the loam-based soil mix first and put them in the cold frame. The anemone corms need to be soaked overnight before planting. These bulbs do not need pre-chilling to flower, but ten to 12 weeks in the cold is required to establish good roots. I put the look together once they started into growth. It is best to plant the crocus a few weeks later as they can easily skip ahead. Snowdrops are intricate and can be expensive so are often enjoyed more in pots. It is essential to protect them against mice and squirrels. Upturned, aquatic mesh pots and mouse traps work well. Watering is crucial; the roots must not dry out once the plant is in growth. Snowdrops require consistent moisture, but dislike wet conditions.

Plants

1 *Crocus* 'Ruby Giant'
With purple hues that are much richer than others in this group and wonderful contrasting golden anthers, this is a showy and fragrant early cultivar. February – March. 12cm. RHS H6.

2 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Viridapice'
Single drooping flowers with a distinctive green blotch at the tips. No need to 'force' as it flowers early, but bring into the warm to get it flowering. January – March. 15cm. AGM. RHS H5.

3 *Anemone blanda* 'Charmer'
Pretty, pale-pink flowers with a light centre. The divided foliage has pinky tones on the underside of the leaf. March – April. 15cm.

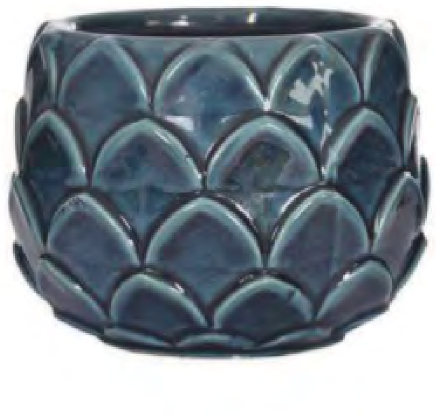
4 *Cyclamen coum* f. *pallidum* 'Album'
Spring-flowering cyclamen, from the pine and beech woodland of southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Flowers range from dark magenta to the white form I have used here. February – March. 10cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

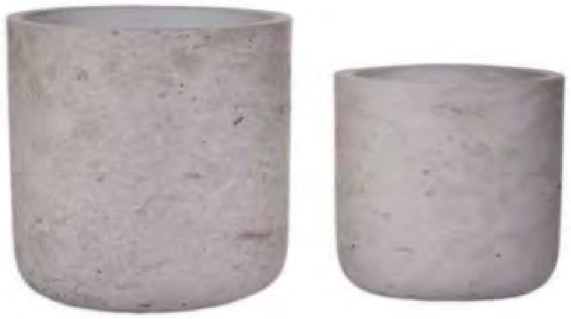
BUYER'S GUIDE

Small pots

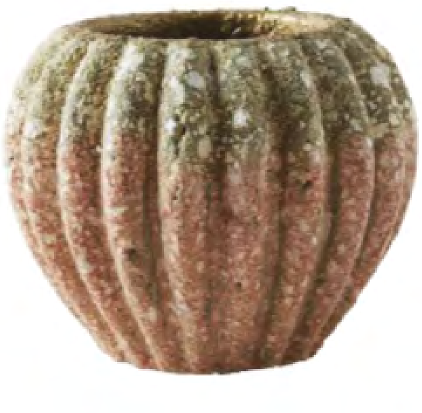
For stand-out plants, table displays and early spring flowers



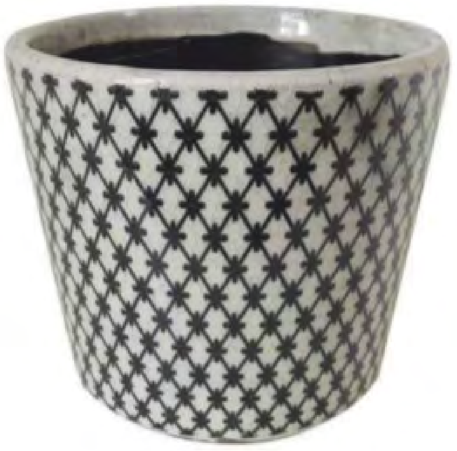
STYLISH DETAIL
Ceramic Artichoke Pot,
H11.5cm x D15cm, £8, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



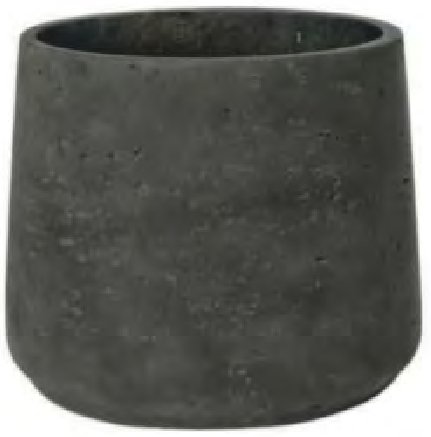
PERFECT PAIR
Stratton Cement Plant Pot, set of two, stone,
H11.5/14.5cm x D12/15cm, £15, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



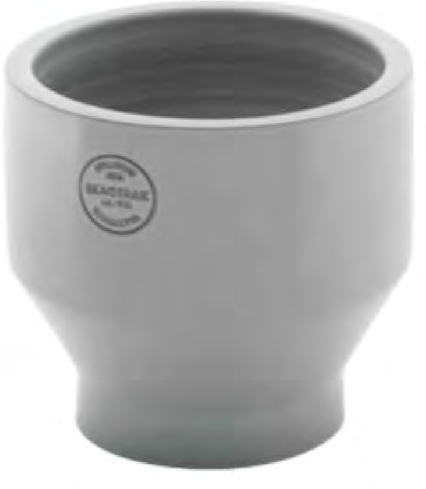
MODERN ANTIQUE
Ariel Pot, pink,
H15cm x D12cm, £10, Anthropologie,
0800 026 8476, anthropologie.com



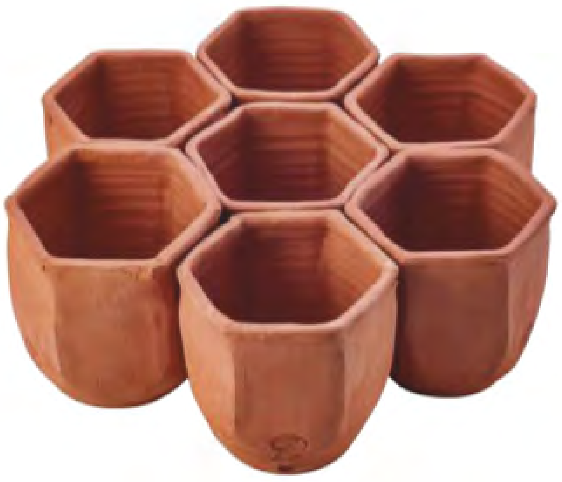
CLASSIC PATTERN
Vintage Patterned Plant Pot, trellis,
H12cm x D14cm, £7.95, The Worm That Turned,
0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk



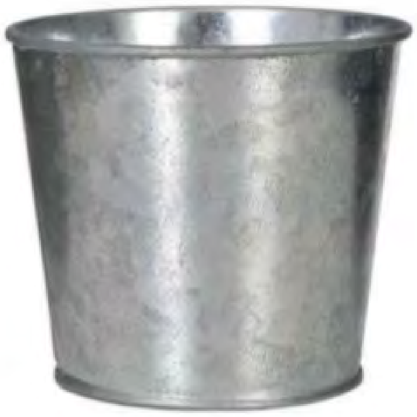
MATTE BLACK
Patt Plant Pot, black washed,
H11cm x D14cm, £9.99, Hortology,
info@hortology.co.uk, hortology.co.uk



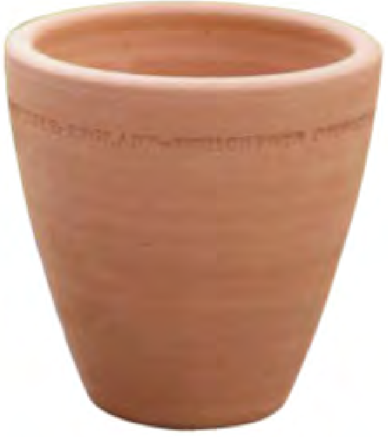
CONTEMPORARY
Edge Pot, light grey,
H18cm x D18cm, 344 DKK, Skagerak,
+45(0) 99 52 52 00, skagerak.dk



HONEYCOMB EFFECT
Hexagonal Terracotta Herb Pot,
H13.5cm x D13.5cm, £14 each, Manufactum,
0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk

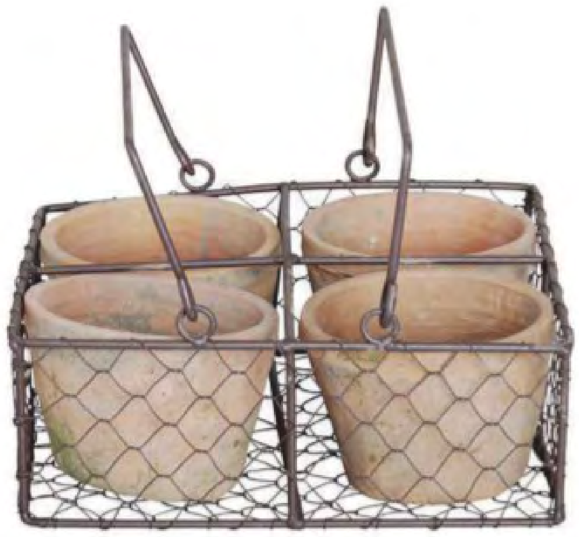


FOR THE KITCHEN GARDEN
Herb Pot, galvanised steel,
H9cm x D11cm, £4.50, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk

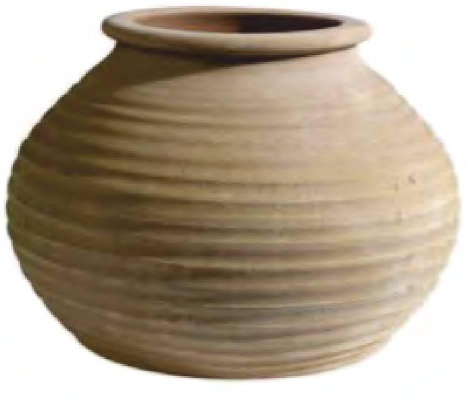


SMALL TERRACOTTA
Auricula Pot,
H10cm x D10cm, £7.50, Whichford Pottery,
01608 684416, whichfordpottery.com

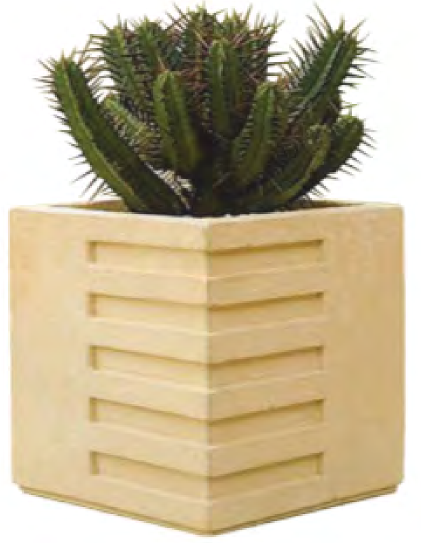
COMPILED BY NIKI GOSS AND ALYS HURN



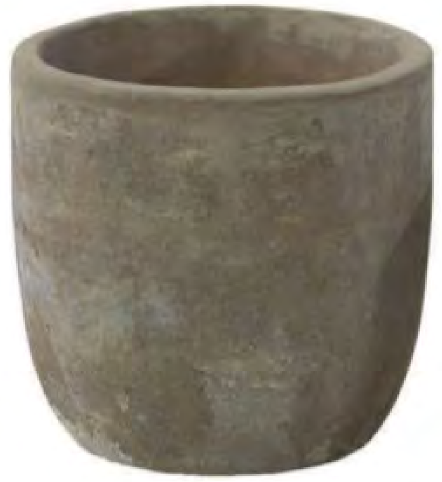
CONNECT FOUR
Aged Terracotta Pot and Wire Basket Set,
H8cm x W22cm (pots D10cm), £18.99,
Crocus, 01344 578111, crocus.co.uk



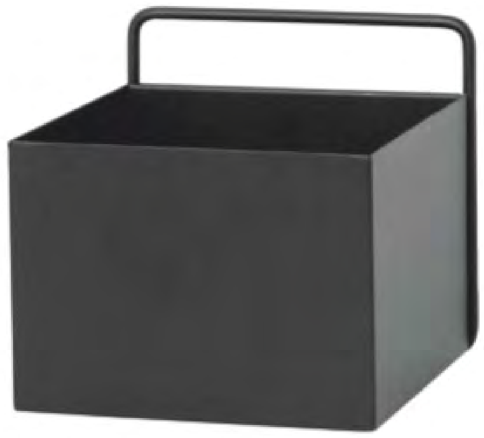
CRETAN POT
Flat Koronyos Planter, terracotta,
H12cm x W18cm, £16, Pots and Pithoi,
01342 714793, potsandpithoi.com



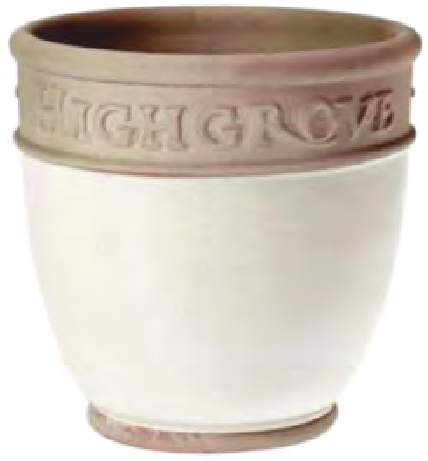
TRADITIONAL
Cast Stone Small Rib Planter, Bath stone,
H11cm x W10cm, £10, Haddonstone,
01604 770711, haddonstone.com



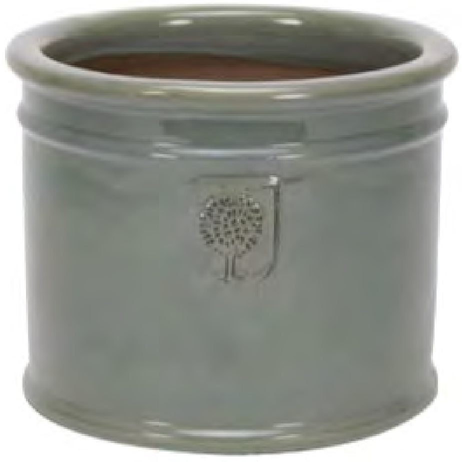
RUSTIC
Affiti Clay Pot,
H16cm x D18cm, £16.95, Nkuku,
0333 240 0155, nkuku.com



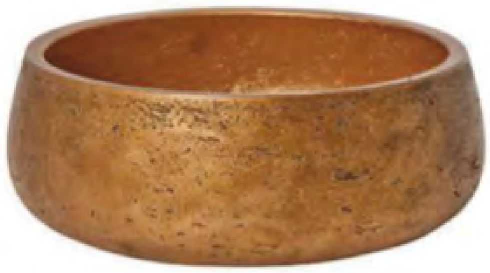
ONWARDS AND UPWARDS
Ferm Living Wall Plant Box Square, black,
H15.6cm x W15.6cm x D14.6cm, £49, Naken,
01986 781663, naken.co.uk



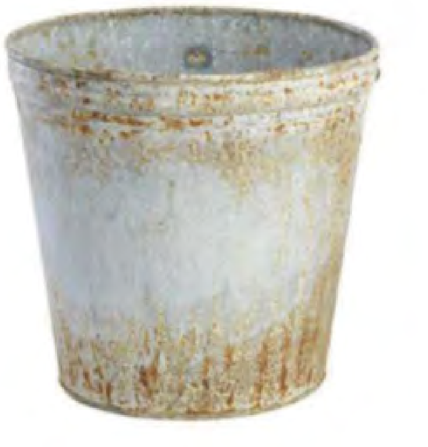
ROYAL APPROVAL
Highgrove Glazed Terracotta Plant Pot, ivory,
H15cm x D15cm, £18.95, Highgrove Shop,
0333 222 4555, highgrovegardens.com



GLAZED
RHS Glazed Cylinder, antique grey,
H18cm x D22cm, £12.99, Crocus,
01344 578111, crocus.co.uk



SUN CATCHER
Eileen Plant Bowl, metallic copper,
H9cm x D24cm, £16.99, Hortology,
info@hortology.co.uk, hortology.co.uk

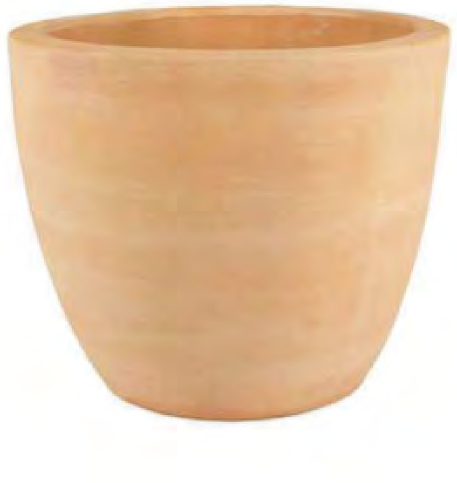


WEATHERED LOOK
Abari Zinc Pot Narrow,
H18cm x D19.5cm, £14.95, Nkuku,
0333 240 0155, nkuku.com

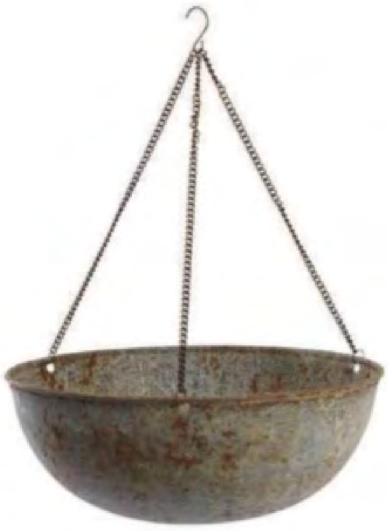
BUYER'S GUIDE

Medium pots

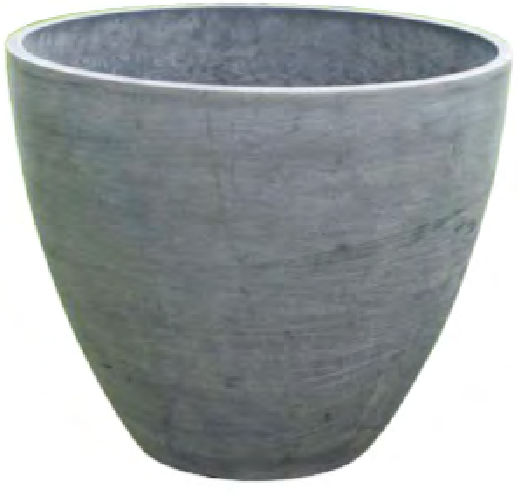
Group together or use for simple combinations



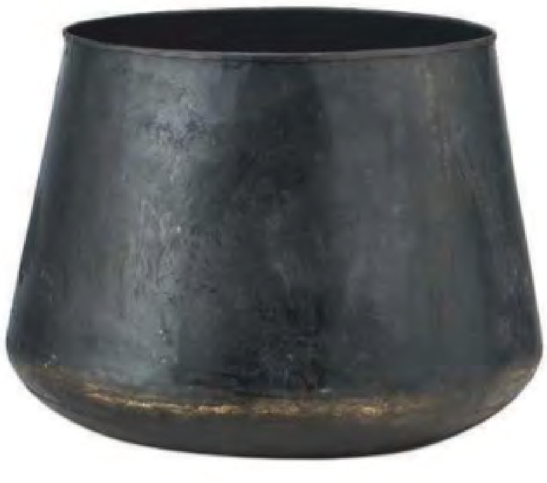
MEDITERRANEAN STYLE
Terracotta Plant Pot,
H33cm x D38cm, £59.99, Hortology,
info@hortology.co.uk, hortology.co.uk



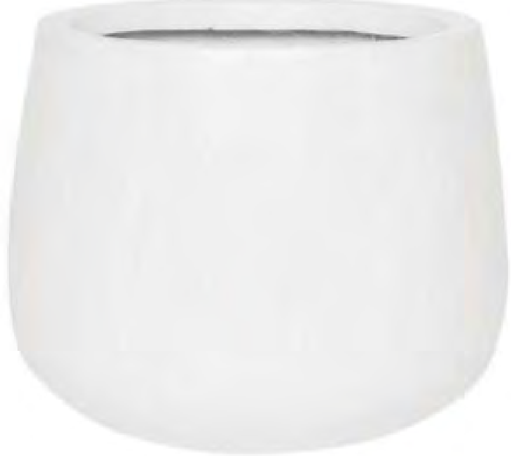
ANTIQUE LOOK
Abari Round Hanging Planter, aged zinc,
H16cm x D39.5cm, £49.95, Nkuku,
0333 240 0155, nkuku.com



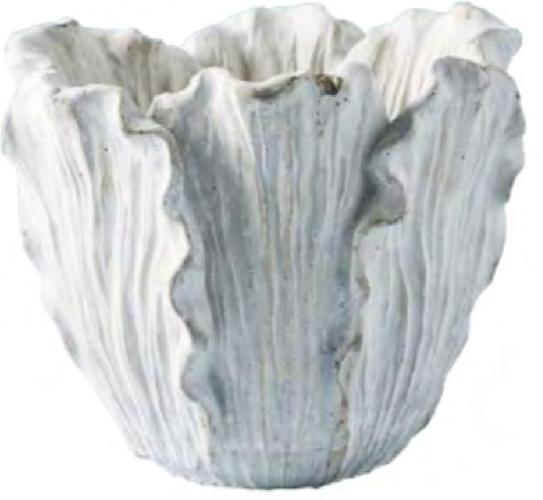
RECYCLED PLASTIC
Antwerp Eco Planter, grey,
H25.5cm x D30cm, £22, Burford,
01993 823117, burford.co.uk



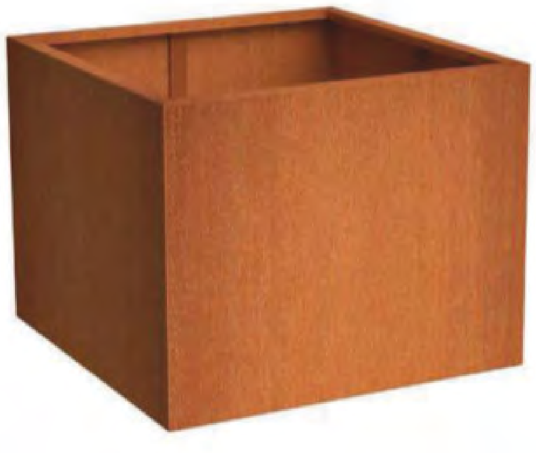
INDUSTRIAL CHARM
Endo Reclaimed Iron Planter,
H31cm x D38cm, £79.95, Nkuku,
0333 240 0155, nkuku.com



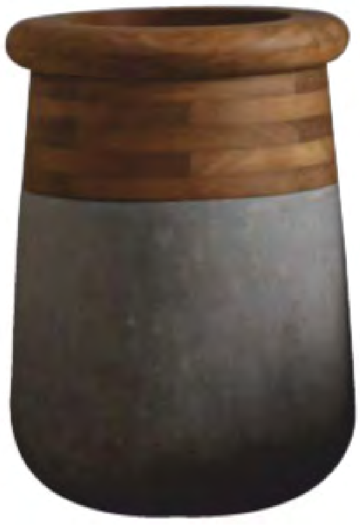
COOL WHITE
Kevan Plant Pot, matt white,
H22cm x D25cm, £44.99, Hortology,
info@hortology.co.uk, hortology.co.uk



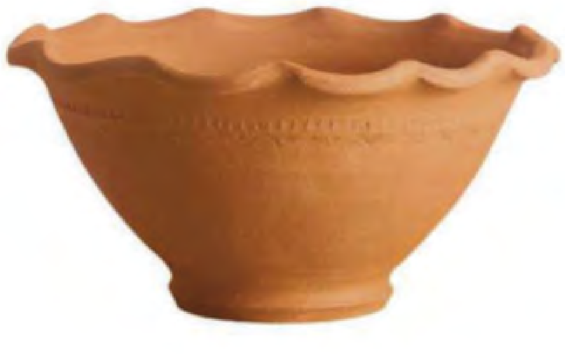
DECORATIVE
Tulip Cement Pot,
H29cm x D33cm, £68, Anthropologie,
0800 026 8476, anthropologie.com



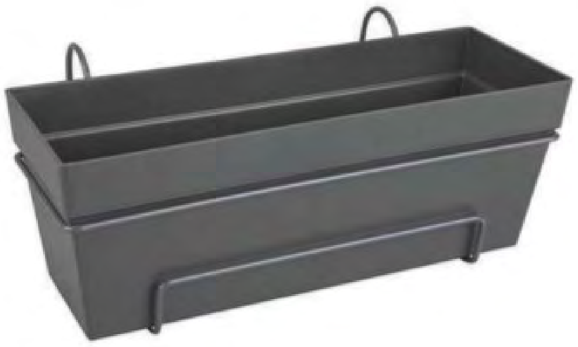
CORTEN CUBED
Square Corten Steel Planter,
H40cm x D40cm x W40cm, £136.95, The Worm
That Turned, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk



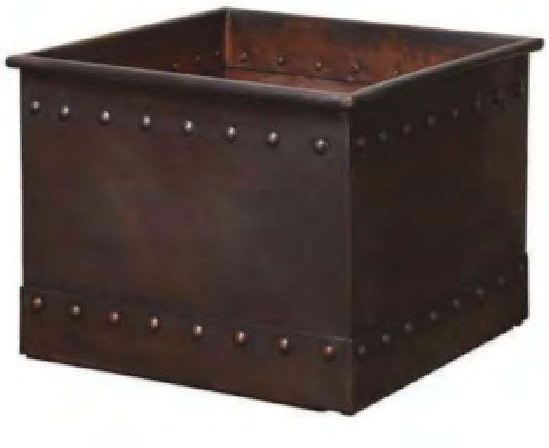
MODERN MATERIALS
Soma Planter, glass-reinforced concrete and Iroko,
H38cm x D25cm, from £3,274, The Modern Garden
Company, 01279 653200, moderngarden.co.uk



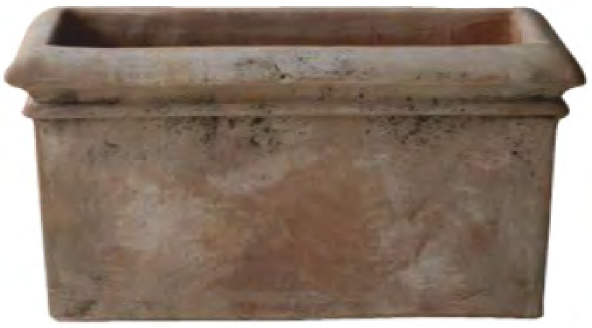
FRILLED EDGING
Scallop Bowl, terracotta,
H25cm x D42cm, £45.50, Whichford Pottery,
01608 684416, whichfordpottery.com



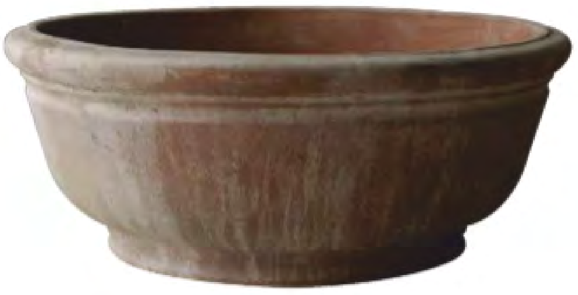
FOR THE BALCONY
Elho Loft Urban Trough All in One, anthracite,
H18cm x W50cm x D25cm, £20.99, Crocus,
01344 578111, crocus.co.uk



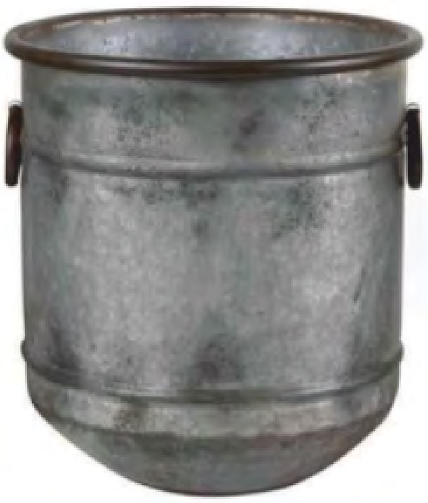
HAND-CRAFTED
Morag Riveted Box, bronze finish on copper,
H42cm x W50cm x D50cm, £1,044, Bronzino,
020 7370 4344, bronzino.co.uk



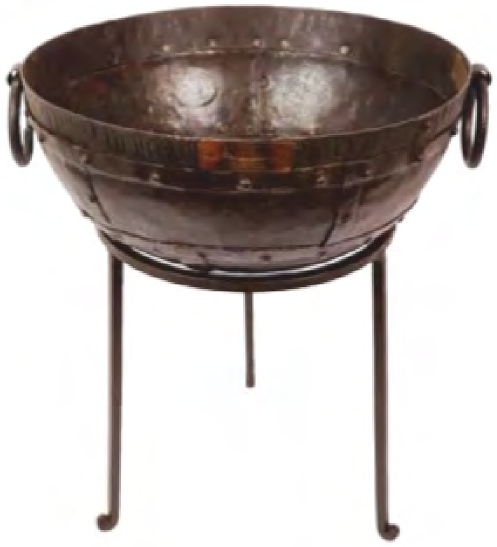
TRADITIONAL TROUGH
Cassetta Finestra Window Box,
H30cm x W60cm x D30cm, £175, Italian Terrace,
01284 789666, italianterrace.co.uk



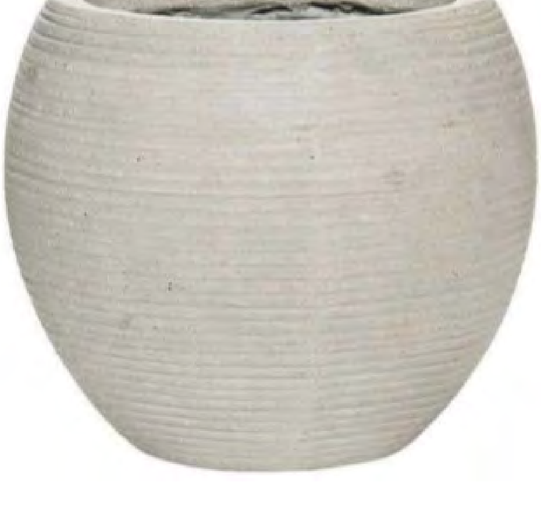
LOW AND WIDE
Ciotola Low Bowl Planter,
H26cm x D60cm, £265, Italian Terrace,
01284 789666, italianterrace.co.uk



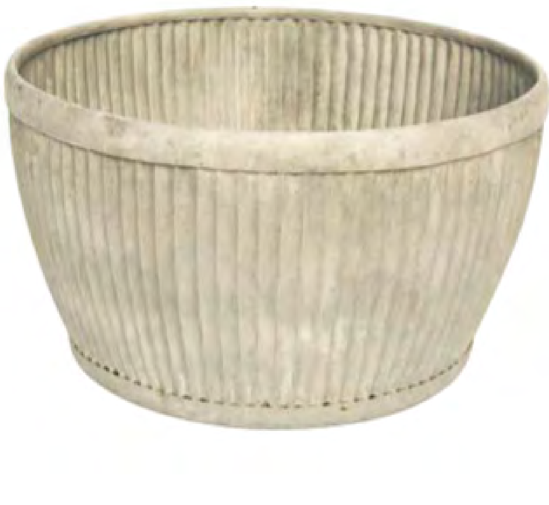
COUNTRY CASUAL
Malmesbury Planter, galvanised steel,
H42cm x D38cm, £40, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



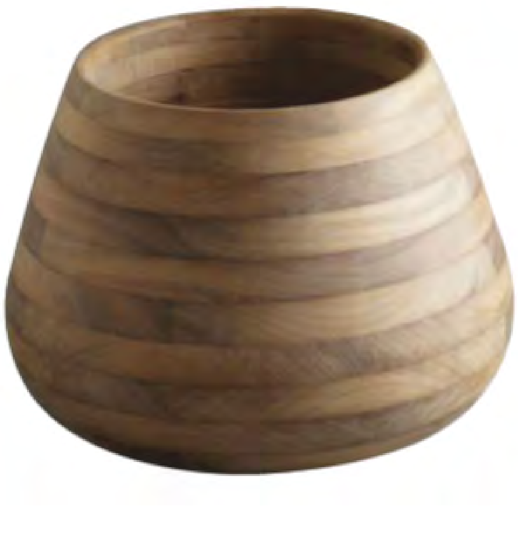
EYE-CATCHING BOWL
Kadai Planter,
H40cm x D35cm, £40, Kadai,
01694 771800, kadai.co.uk



CURVACEOUS
Abby Ball Plant Pot, ridged cement,
H30cm x D35cm, £64.99, Hortology,
info@hortology.co.uk, hortology.co.uk



RIBBED ZINC
Galvanised Dolly Bowl, antique zinc,
H34cm x D61cm, £69.99, Crocus,
01344 578111, crocus.co.uk

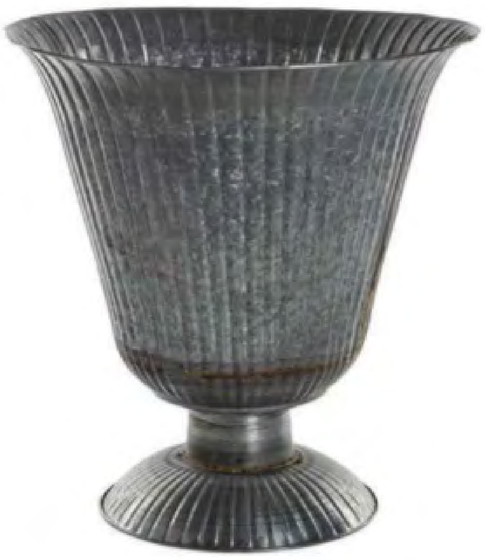


WARM TONES
Tuber Iroko Wood Planter,
H43cm x D67cm, from £3,102, The Modern Garden Company, 01279 653200, moderngarden.co.uk

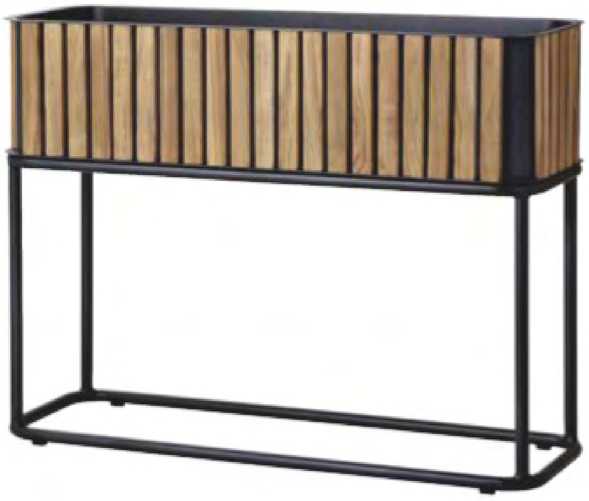
BUYER'S GUIDE

Large pots

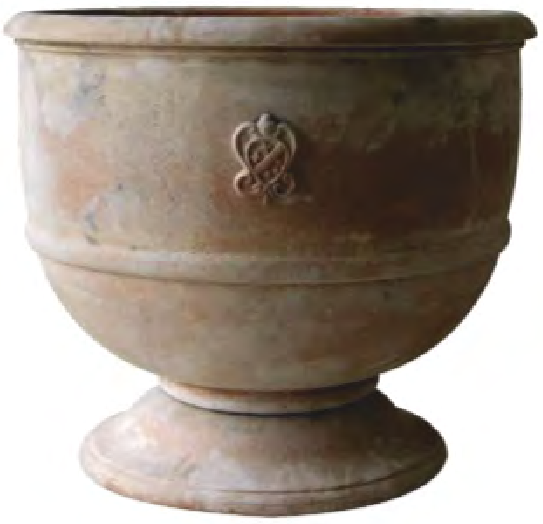
For long-lasting displays and creative combinations



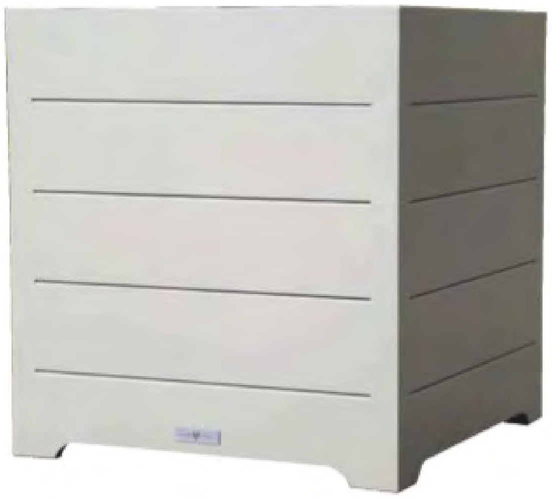
CLASSICAL TOUCH
Galvanised Metal Garden Urn,
H53cm x D48cm, £90, Raj Tent Club,
020 8847 2212, rajtentclub.com



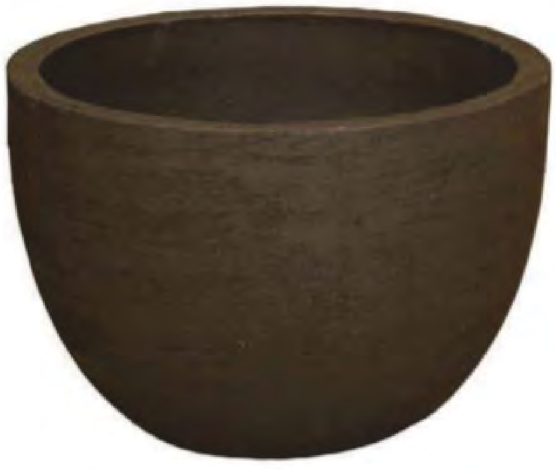
FOR TIGHT SPACES
Teak Planter on Frame, lava grey,
H62cm x W83cm x D53cm, £480, The Worm
That Turned, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk



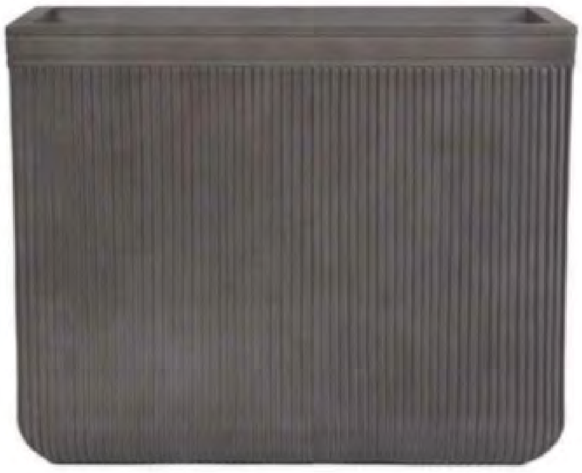
CUP OF PLENTY
Coppa Planter, terracotta,
H65cm x D75cm, £475, Italian Terrace,
01284 789666, italianterrace.co.uk



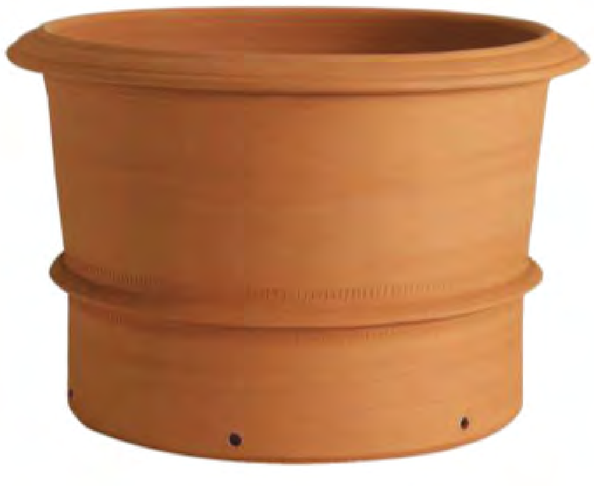
CLEAN LINES
The Keble No 3 Classic Planter, painted hardwood,
H56cm x W60cm x D60cm, £853, Oxford Planters,
01608 683022, oxfordplanters.co.uk



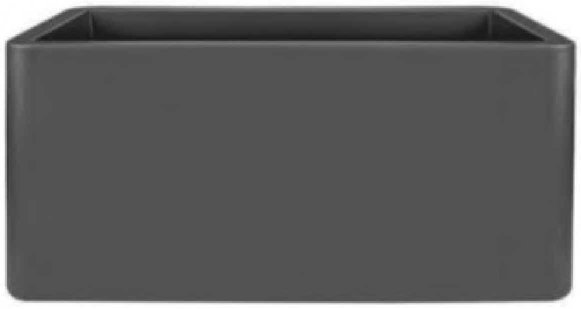
EARTHY
Texel, terracotta,
H35cm x D50cm, from £2,686, The Modern Garden
Company, 01279 653200, moderngarden.co.uk



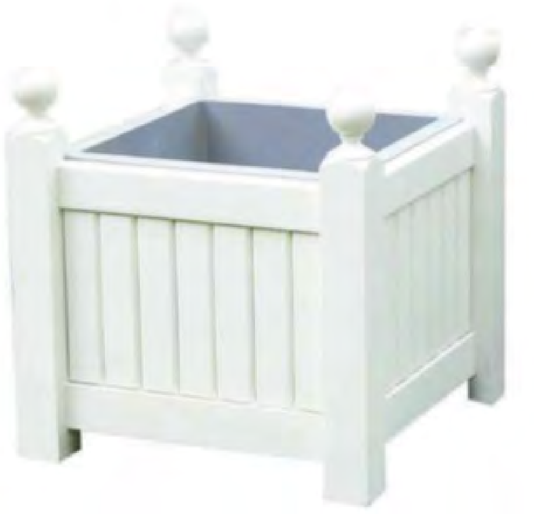
DOLLY-STYLE TUB
Bathford Rectangular Planter, fibre clay,
H49cm x W60cm x D30cm, £75, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



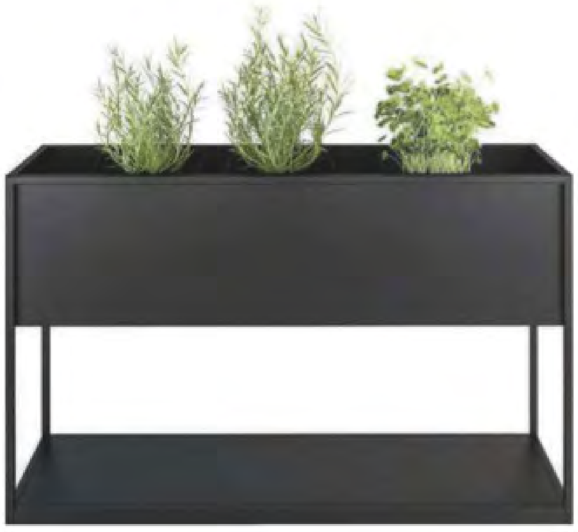
SPACIOUS
Mulberry Pot, terracotta,
H50cm x D78cm, £675, Whichford Pottery,
01608 684416, whichfordpottery.com



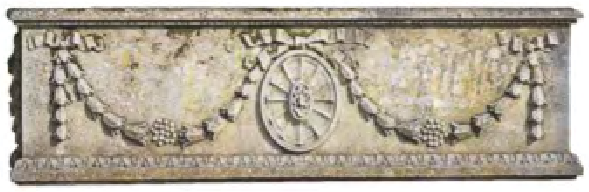
MOVEABLE FEAST
Elho Pure Soft Brick Long Wheels, anthracite,
H39cm x W79cm x D39cm, £169.99, Crocus,
01344 578111, crocus.co.uk



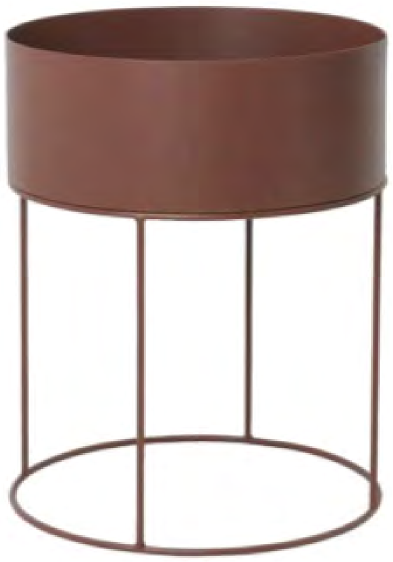
COUNTRY LIVING
Versailles Box Planter, Iroko painted white,
H49cm x W46cm x D46cm, from £788,
Andrew Crace, 01279 842685, andrewcrace.com



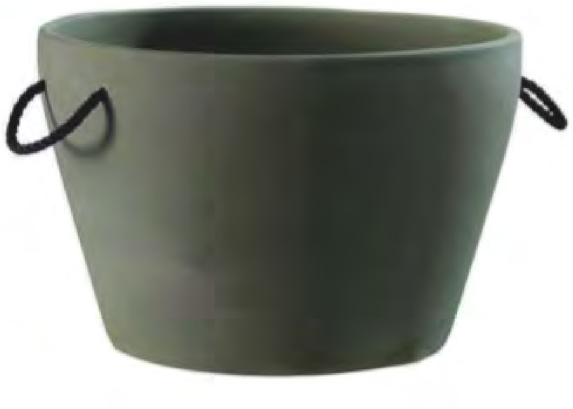
A LEVEL UP
Röshults Carl Planter 615 1 Box, anthracite,
H61.5cm x W100cm x D30cm, £1,046.57,
Archiproducts, archiproducts.com



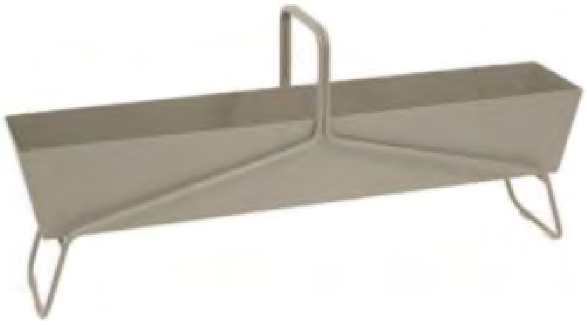
ALL IN THE DETAIL
Adam Trough, cast stone,
H35.5cm x W122cm x D34.5cm, £625,
Haddonstone, 01604 770711, haddonstone.com



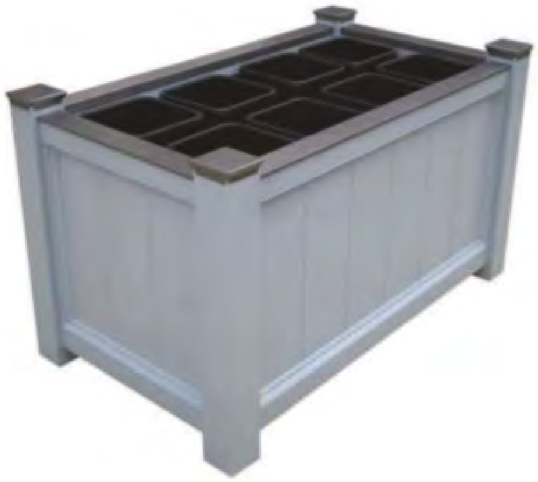
POWDER-COATED METAL
Ferm Living Round Plant Box, red brown,
H50cm x D40cm, £159, Naken,
01986 781663, naken.co.uk



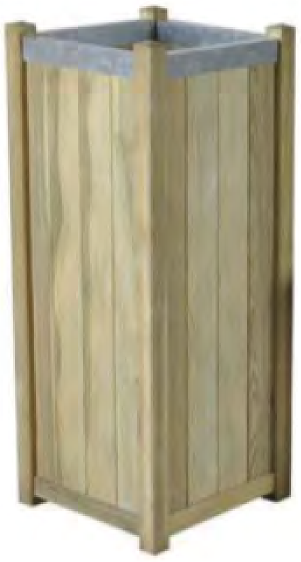
FRENCH CHIC
Jarre Chaudron, vert de chine,
H35cm x D53cm, €282, Manufacture de Digoin,
+33 (0)3 85 25 51 51, manufacturededigoin.com



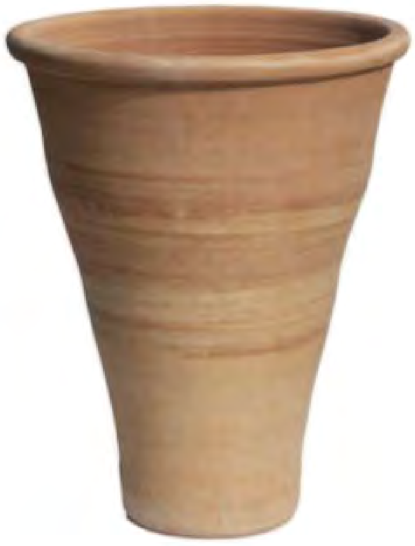
CHOICE OF COLOURWAYS
Fermob Basket Long Planter, nutmeg,
H54cm x W119cm x D25cm, £429, Barbed,
020 8878 1994, barbed.co.uk



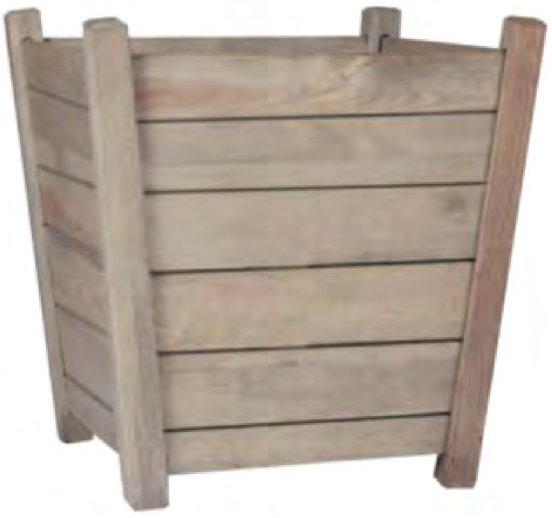
INTERCHANGEABLE INNER POTS
Low Flat Top No.8 Planter, painted aluminium,
Made to measure, from £1,875, Squareroot
Planters, 01787 312068, squarerootplanters.com



LONG ROOT RUN
Slender Wooden Planter, large,
H100cm x W40cm x D40cm, £89.99, The Worm
That Turned, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk



ELEGANCE
Long Tom Planter, terracotta
H120cm x D65cm, £495, Pots and Pithoi,
01342 714793, potsandpithoi.com



NEW TRADITIONAL
Kingham Planter, FSC spruce,
H60cm x W60cm x D60cm, £165, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk

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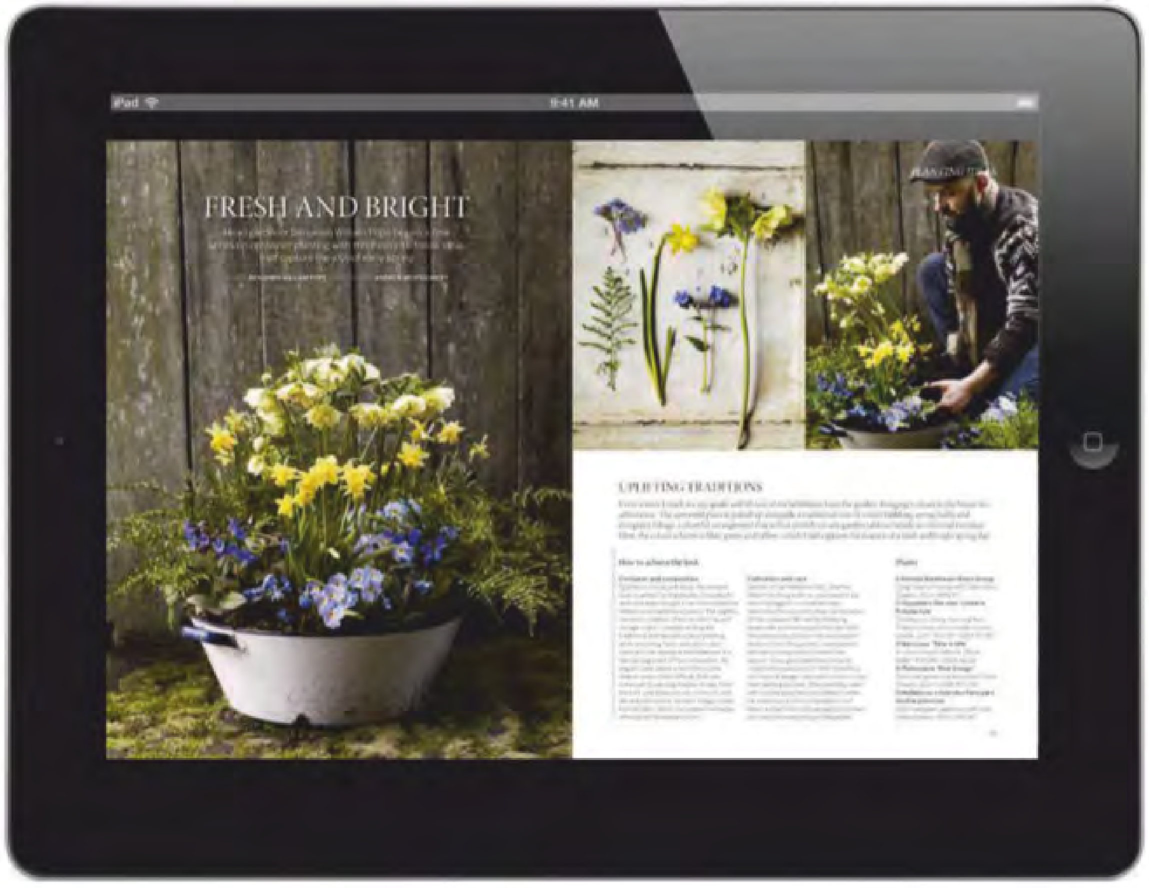
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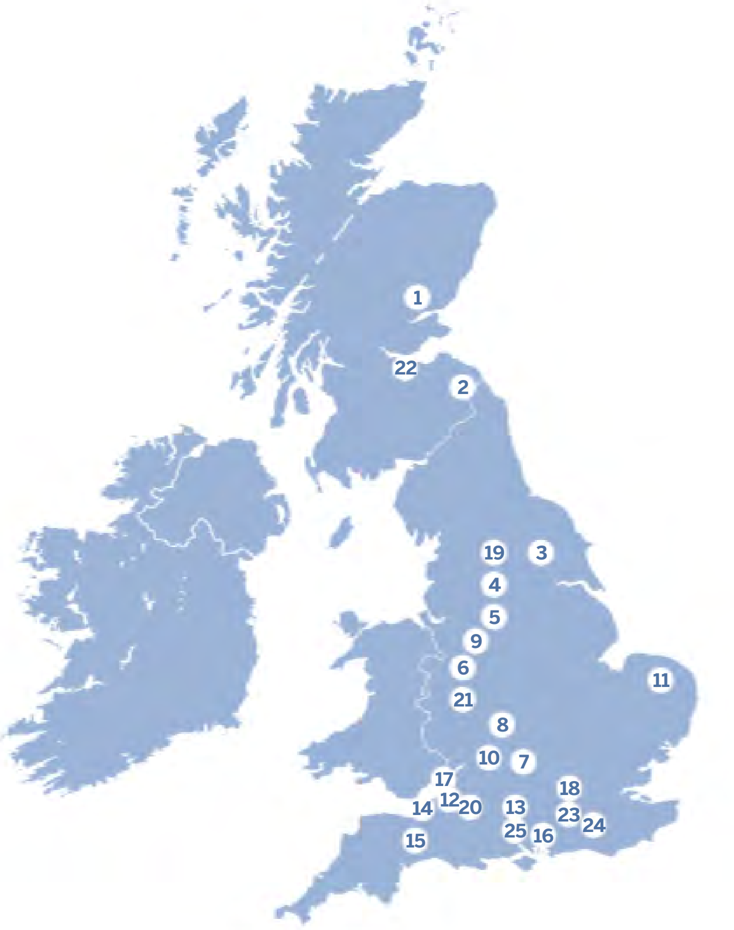

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2019 workshop dates and venues: *unless noted all days run from 10am–4.30pm.*

THURSDAY 4 APRIL £45 5.30PM
Yeo Valley Organic Gardens, Somerset (14)
Garden visit with supper and film screening of 'Five Seasons – The gardens of Piet Oudolf'

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL £140
Yeo Valley Organic Gardens, Somerset (14)
Plants Grow in Dirt with Bob Brown and a propagation workshop with Andi Strachan

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY £130
Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire (6)
The Rabbit's Eye View – learning about long-term plant performance with Noel Kingsbury

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY £140
The Coach House, Gloucestershire (10)
Working a Concept through to Completion – a garden design workshop with Annie Guilfoyle

TUESDAY 28 & WEDNESDAY 29 MAY €300
*please note Euros
Col de la Gineste & Mèze, Southern France
Lessons in the Landscape – a two-day workshop with Helen & James Basson & Olivier Filippi

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE £160 ⌂
Thenford Arboretum, Northamptonshire (8)
Choosing Trees with John Grimshaw

TUESDAY 18 JUNE £140 ⌂
Chatsworth Gardens, Derbyshire (9)
Beauty and Biodiversity, Water and Well-Being: Integrating Art and Ecology for Sustainable Gardens with Dr Nigel Dunnett

THURSDAY 20 JUNE £160 SOLD OUT
Hillside Gardens, Somerset (17)
Keying into Context – identifying and enhancing sense of place with Dan Pearson

FRIDAY 21 JUNE £160 SOLD OUT
Hillside Gardens, Somerset (17)
Keying into Context – identifying and enhancing sense of place with Dan Pearson

TUESDAY 25 JUNE £140 ⌂
East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens, Norfolk (11)
An introduction to Roses with Michael Marriott

TUESDAY 2 JULY £140
Bury Court, Hampshire (13)
Gardens through the Lens – a photography workshop with Jason Ingram

WEDNESDAY 3 JULY €150 *please note Euros
Vlinderhof, Utrecht, Netherlands
Piet Oudolf's Planting Style – How does he do it? with Noel Kingsbury

FRIDAY 5 JULY £150 (10.30AM–5PM)
Forde Abbey, Dorset (15)
Working with the Meadow Aesthetic – designing and managing perennial meadows with Dr Nigel Dunnett & Joshua Sparkes

WEDNESDAY 10 JULY £140
Green and Gorgeous, Oxfordshire (7)
Growing Perennials as Cut Flowers with Rachel Siegfried

WEDNESDAY 10 JULY £25.00 6.30PM ⌂
Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Yorkshire (5)
Film screening of 'Five Seasons – The gardens of Piet Oudolf'

THURSDAY 11 JULY £130 ⌂
Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Yorkshire (5)
Sketch with Confidence – developing drawing skills for garden designers with Liz Ackerley

TUESDAY 23 JULY £140 ⌂
Scampston Walled Garden, Yorkshire (3)
Plants for a Purpose – right plant, right place with Rosy Hardy

WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST £130 ⌂
Whitburgh House, Midlothian (22)
Planting Design and Contemporary Art with Elliott Forsyth

MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER £140
Bury Court, Hampshire (13)
A Collaborative Approach to Design and Planting with Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg

MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER £140
Parham House and Gardens, West Sussex (16)
The Plantsman's Year – a guide to seasonal interest in the garden, along with a propagation workshop with Tom Brown & Marina Christopher

TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER £140 ⌂
East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens, Norfolk (11)
Designing with Colour with Nick Bailey

TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER £140
Stillingfleet Lodge, Yorkshire (4)
Lose your Fear of Pruning with Timothy Walker

WEDNESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER £140
Borde Hill, Surrey (23)
The Rabbit's Eye View – learning about long-term plant performance with Noel Kingsbury

THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER £140
Wildegoose Nursery, Shropshire (21)
Gardens through the Lens – a photography workshop with Jason Ingram

For booking and details of all workshops go to
gardenmasterclass.org
or email gardenmasterclass@gmail.com

FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER £140
Arvensis Perennials, Wiltshire (20)
Planting Design for the Public Realm – creating resilient and characterful planting for urban, public spaces with Giacomo Guzzon & Ton Muller

TUESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER £140
Great Dixter, East Sussex (24)
The Rabbit's Eye View – learning about long-term plant performance with Noel Kingsbury and Fergus Garrett

WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER £140 (11AM–6PM)
Yeo Valley Organic Gardens, Somerset (14)
The Ultimate Kitchen Garden with Mark Diacono & Lia Leendertz

MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER £160
Iford Manor Gardens, Wiltshire (12)
Creative Containers for Seasonal Impact with Troy Scott-Smith

WEDNESDAY 2 OCTOBER £130
Alitex, Torberry Farm, Hampshire (25)
Growing Under Glass – edible and ornamentals with Sarah Wain

THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER £140
Wildegoose Nursery, Shropshire (21)
The Rabbit's Eye View – learning about long-term plant performance with Noel Kingsbury

THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER £140 (10.30AM–5PM)
Forde Abbey, Dorset (15)
Garden Evolution – a design workshop with Joshua Sparkes & Annie Guilfoyle

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER £150
Horniman Museum, London (18)
Using Grasses and Perennials in the Modern Garden with Neil Lucas

MONDAY 14 OCTOBER £150
Beningbrough Hall Gallery & Gardens, Yorkshire (19) Contemporary Gardens in an Historic Setting – a design workshop with Andy Sturgeon

THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER £140
Adderstone House, Northumberland (2)
Developing the Garden Narrative – a garden design workshop with Annie Guilfoyle and Sean Murray

FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER £45 6.30PM
Hospitalfield, Arbroath (1)
Supper and film screening of 'Five Seasons – The gardens of Piet Oudolf'

SATURDAY 19 OCTOBER £150
Hospitalfield, Arbroath (1)
Beauty and Biodiversity, Water and Well-Being: Integrating Art and Ecology for Sustainable Gardens with Dr Nigel Dunnett

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Potting compost guide

If you find it daunting to be faced with bag upon bag of compost piled high at the garden centre, consult our handy guide below to familiarise yourself with the types of potting compost and their suitability for the different stages of plant growth

SOILS

- **Multi-purpose** Pretty much what it says on the tin. Suitable for use in all garden situations and at all stages of growth.
- **Seed compost** A potting mix much lower in nutrients than other soil types so as not to overwhelm seeds, and often mixed with sand to create a finer texture to give seeds the best chance of germination.
- **John Innes** A range of compost formulas celebrated for their soil-based content. John Innes mixes are widely used in both professional and home gardens. Some still contain peat (see below), while others use peat alternatives. Check before buying.
- **John Innes No.1** Use to pot up young seedlings to allow them to establish before being planted out in their final growing position.
- **John Innes No.2** With a rich nutrient content to feed plants for longer, this formula also helps stabilise plants grown in containers.
- **John Innes No.3** The richest of the three. Suitable for the final repotting of mature plants that are destined to remain in their pot for a number of years.
- **Ericaceous** Developed to promote the health of plants needing acid soil conditions, such as rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and blueberries.
- **Peat and peat alternatives** Thanks to its capacity to hold water and nutrients, peat has been used extensively for gardening over the past 50 years. But the environmental impact of extracting peat is a concern and more gardeners are increasingly turning to peat-free alternatives, which perform just as well. However, peat-free and reduced-peat mixes vary in consistency. Read the packaging carefully to make sure it is the right product for your plants. It may be necessary to add a specific fertiliser alongside the compost to achieve a suitable growing medium.
- **Using old compost** Bags of unused or old compost will start to break down and may not perform as well as they would when fresh. Add it to the compost bin, along with other clippings and mix well with plenty of harder material such as straw or cardboard.

SOIL ADDITIONS

It is often necessary to add to compost to improve drainage, water retention or nutrients when planting in containers, as essential elements are much more limited in pots than in the soil. Here is a list of some of the most commonly used additions:

- **Horticultural grit** Available in different sizes depending on the desired use. Mix small aggregates into compost to improve aeration and drainage or top dress containers with a more decorative type to mask the appearance of bare soil.
- **Leaf mould** A soil conditioner made using fallen autumn leaves collected from the garden. Takes around two years to break down, but once well rotted, leaf mould can be mixed with soil to use as a potting compost.
- **Blood, fish and bone** Worked into the soil throughout the growing season, blood, fish and bone provides a natural source of three major nutrients – nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium – to encourage healthy plant growth.
- **Biochar** A form of charcoal made with untreated woody waste that remains stable in the soil and helps improve soil structure and water retention, and enhance beneficial microbial activity.
- **Liquid seaweed** Rich in micro-nutrients and a sustainable resource. Natural alternative to synthetic or animal-based fertilisers for encouraging healthy production of flowers and fruit. Apply during flowering season.
- **Slow-release fertiliser** Concentrated source of plant nutrients, which have no or little effect on soil structure or fertility but will help to combat plant deficiencies. These fertilisers degrade slowly and are dependent on soil temperature.
- **Hydroleca** Pebble-like in appearance, hydroleca has the capability to absorb a large amount of water and then release it slowly to keep plants hydrated. Use as a pot topping, or in place of crocks for drainage.

SUPPLIERS

Carbon Gold 0117 244 0032, carbongold.com
Clover 028 8774 0488, cloverpeat.co.uk
Dalefoot Composts 01931 713281, dalefootcomposts.co.uk
Levington lovethegarden.com
Melcourt 01666 502711, melcourt.co.uk
Thompson & Morgan 0844 573 1818, thompson-morgan.com
Westland 01480 443789, gardenhealth.com

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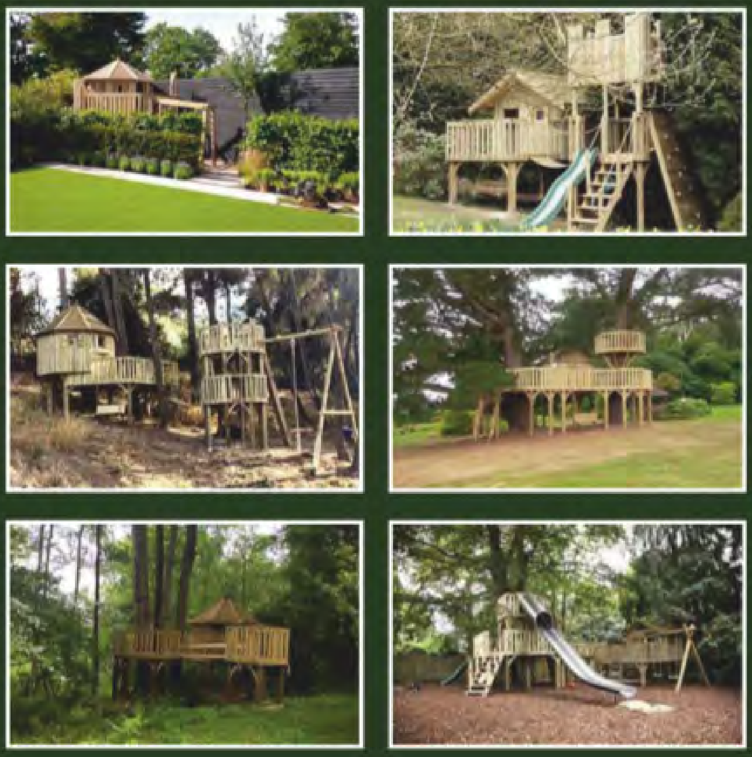

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